

THE NEW TESTAMENT STORY

RETOLD FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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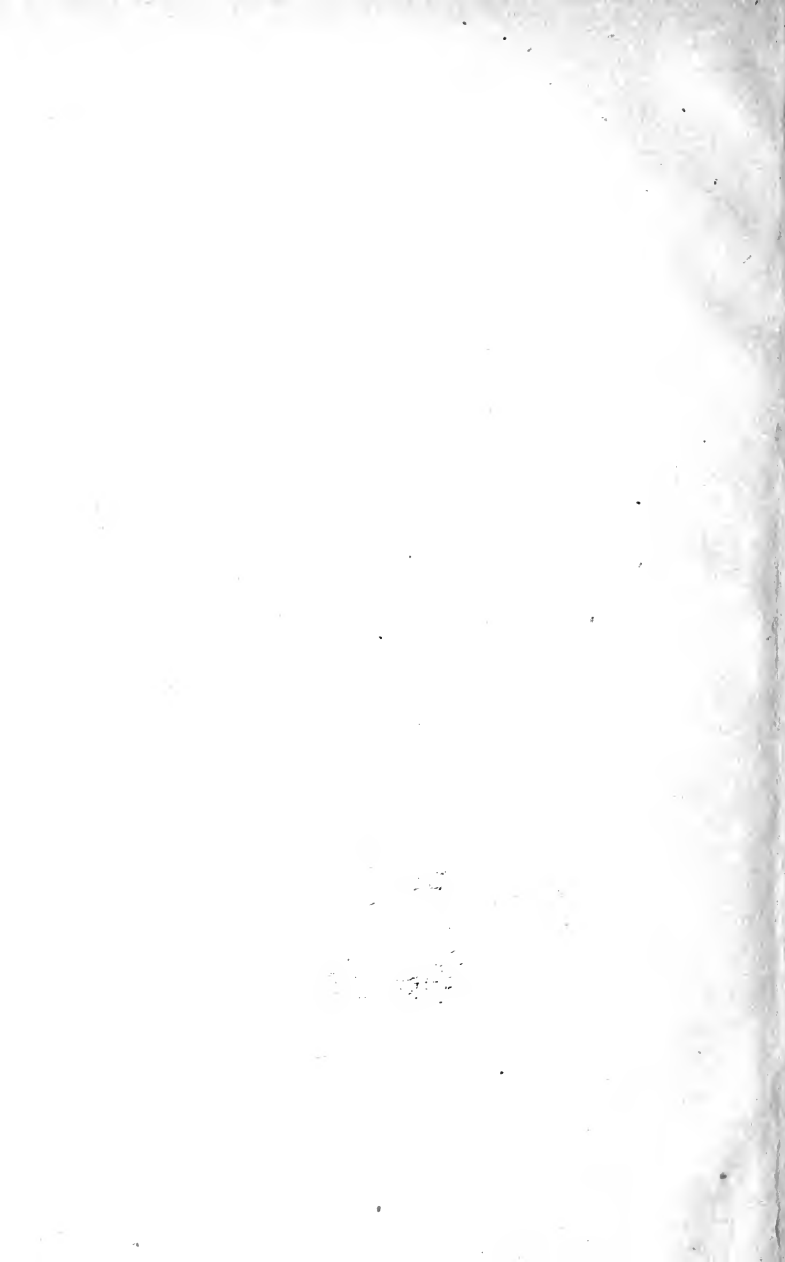
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PART II

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NEW TESTAMENT STORY

Retold for Young People

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS



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I

THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS



CHAPTER I

HOME LIFE AT NAZARETH

HIGH up among the wild hills of the country that was once called Galilee is a little town, built in a sort of cup or basin that seems to be scooped out of the face of the cliff. If you look at it across the great green plain below, when the sun is shining at noon on its white houses, this little town seems like a patch of snow left unmelted on the dull brown hills. If you climb the steep, winding path among the rocks—a very tiring scramble for a hot day—you will see that the houses are planted on any level bit of ground that can be found, so that when you go out of one house you almost step on the roof of another. There are no regular streets—only narrow lanes, and in some places flights of stone steps leading from house to house. This is Nazareth. At the time of Jesus it was a larger and more important place than it is to-day.

Many hundreds of years ago there lived at Nazareth a kind, quiet man named Joseph, and Mary his

good and gentle wife. They were poor, and they had to work hard for their living. Joseph was a carpenter; and while he was in his workshop, Mary would have to busy herself about the house, keeping the place clean and tidy, sewing and mending clothes, baking bread. She would not have much cooking to do: they would live very simply, for the most part on such food as bread and figs, dates and honey and curdled milk and, perhaps, a little fish when the hawkers brought it through the town, and, as a treat, some meat on feast days. Every morning and again every evening, Mary would go down to the well, a spring breaking out of the rock. She would carry her pitcher on her head. At the well she would meet other women of the town who were too poor to keep servants, going to and fro with their pitchers of water. On washing days, she would carry her linen to the stream running out from the well, and rinse it in the sparkling water that splashed among the stones.

There were several boys and girls in the carpenter's cottage. Jesus was the eldest. He was Mary's firstborn. We know that He was also the Son of God. But, when he came into the world as a little baby, He must have looked like any other little baby. His mother had to feed Him and care for Him. If she had not done so, He would have died. But in time He grew tall and strong, as boys will grow. His mind, too, grew wiser, and He came to know more and more as He grew older. Every year He



WOMAN CARRYING CHILD ON SHOULDER



lived the neighbours learnt to love Him more kindly, and every year He lived God smiled on Him more brightly, so that His heart was full of joy, and His life was full of sweetness.

You may be sure that when He was quite a little boy He could climb the rocks round His home; for He was always strong and active and healthy, and He loved the mountain heights. Then, as He wandered over the countryside, many a lovely sight would fill His soul with wonder and with praise to His Father in heaven, who had made all things so beautiful. In spring hosts of flowers came up after the rain — the brightest of them, the blood-red anemones, scattered over the hills like spots of flame. Perhaps green and gold lizards — of which there are many — would dart out from under the rocks, or peep at Him with their bead-like eyes. In ten minutes He could reach the hill-top. There He would have a grand view of snow mountains, and the blue sea with the ships at anchor in the bay, and miles of hill and dale between. Crowning a hill quite near He would see a fortress, with its stern, frowning walls.

A high road from the port to the far-off city of Damascus passed through Nazareth, and the boy Jesus would often see troops of merchants with their wares on camels' backs; some of them would open their bales in the market-place, and offer their goods for sale.

We are not told how Jesus was taught, but no

doubt it was with Him as with other cottage lads. If so, when He was very young He would learn to read and write from lessons given Him by His parents at home. His lesson book would be the Old Testament, which was the Jews' Bible. When He was about five years old, as we may suppose, He was sent to school at the synagogue; that is the Jewish place of worship, like our church or chapel. This place was used for services on Saturday (the Sabbath of the Jews), and for week-day services on Monday and Wednesday. At other times it was used for meetings, and for school-teaching. The school-teaching was very simple. Jesus never went to college, as Paul did. His best lessons He got from the Bible, from God's book of nature in the lovely scenes round His home, and from the Spirit of God in His own heart.

When He was old enough, Jesus went to work in the carpenter's shop, and thus He became Himself a carpenter. For fifteen years or more He worked with hammer and saw and plane. An old writer, who lived in the next century, says He used to make ploughs and yokes. Depend upon it, He made them well — His ploughs, smooth and true, so that the ploughmen would have no excuse to turn back grumbling and complaining; and His yokes easy, so as not to gall the shoulders of the poor patient oxen. In this way He lived till He was thirty years old. To His neighbours He seemed to be an ordinary working-man. And yet, though

He was doing nothing wonderful, there was this great difference between Him and everybody else in Nazareth. There was no evil in Him ; He never did an ill deed ; He never spoke a bad word. If you could have seen the secret thoughts of His heart, you would have found them as pure as a garden of white lilies.

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF GABRIEL

WHEN a man becomes great and famous, people like to find out all they can about his early days. So it was with Jesus. He only got known beyond the little group of His friends at Nazareth when He came out in public, and then He was about thirty years old. The earliest account of Jesus we have is in St. Mark's Gospel, and that begins at this part of His life. But afterwards the Christians began to inquire about His early days. Perhaps Mary herself then told the wonders she had long kept secret in her heart. The story of Gabriel is one of these wonders. It begins in the old days before Mary was married, when she was a girl at home ; and it tells first of another mother and another child. This is the story.

In the south country, far away from Nazareth, there was living an old priest named Zacharias. He had a wife named Elisabeth, who was Mary's cousin. They were good people ; but they felt sad because they had no child. It happened one day, when Zacharias was taking his turn at the temple in Jerusalem, burning sweet spices that filled the air with scent, that he saw an angel standing by the side of the rising smoke. The sight frightened

him very much. But the angel said, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias; because your prayer is heard, and your wife Elisabeth shall have a son, and you shall call his name John" (that means "the Favour of God"). The angel then went on to say how the child was to be brought up. For one thing, he was to have no wine to drink. God had a great work for him to do; it was to prepare the people for Christ.

This was all too wonderful for Zacharias to believe.

But the angel said, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and I am sent to speak to you, to bring you this good news."

When the old priest went out of the temple he was dumb, and all people wondered what had happened.

Some months later, but still before Mary had left her home to go and live with Joseph, the angel Gabriel came to her in Nazareth, and said, "Hail! you are highly favoured; the Lord is with you." Mary was frightened, and puzzled to think what this could mean. Then the angel said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for God is pleased with you," and he went on to tell her that she should have a son.

"You must call His name Jesus" — which means "Saviour" — said the angel. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Then the angel told her about Elisabeth. So Mary set out to pay her cousin a visit. When they met and talked together about these angel visits, they were both so full of joy that they burst out singing to the praise of God.

Now the angel's words came true. First a baby was born in the house of the old priest. When they were going to give him a name, the friends said he must be named Zacharias after his father. But his mother said, "No ; he shall be called John." Then they made signs to his father to find out what he wanted the child to be called. The priest wrote down, "His name is John"; and everybody wondered. The next moment Zacharias, who had not spoken a word since he had seen the angel standing by the smoking altar, opened his mouth and began to praise God.

CHAPTER III

THE SHEPHERDS OF BETHLEHEM

THE country in which Jesus lived was part of the great Roman Empire. At the time of the birth of Jesus the head of the empire was Augustus. He was the first of the emperors, and he ruled very well. From time to time he used to give orders for his people to be counted. We should call this counting a "census"; but then it was called an "enrolment," because the names of the families were set down in lists or rolls.

The story of the shepherds of Bethlehem tells us that, for the sake of one of these enrolments, Joseph and Mary had to travel right away from Nazareth in the north, through Jerusalem to the little town of Bethlehem on the other side, a journey of several days; because the families of both of them belonged to that city. The Romans did not care where the families came from. But the Jews were very particular about this matter; and the census was to be taken in a Jewish way.

When they reached Bethlehem they first went to the inn. This would not have been at all like one of our comfortable modern inns, where travellers can get both lodging and food. The inn at an Eastern town is only a sort of shelter. There is a

yard in the middle, where merchants stack their goods, and where people cook their food. All round are bare rooms where the travellers stay. They have to bring their own food. When Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem they found that all these rooms had been taken by other people. So they went to the stable where the oxen and asses were put up. It would be quieter than the noisy yard of the inn. Here Jesus was born. His mother laid Him in a manger, a place made for the cattle to feed out of. This was His cradle.

It is said that people kept the sheep for the sacrifices of the temple at Jerusalem in the fields near Bethlehem, and that there shepherds had to watch the flocks all the year round; so that this night when Jesus was born there would be shepherds out near Bethlehem, even if it was winter time, though at other places the sheep would be shut up in their folds. We can fancy we see these shepherds, each sitting on a rock, his head wrapped in a sort of mantle, a sheepskin on his back, a fire of brushwood blazing in the midst to keep off wild beasts. This is the country where David killed the lion and the bear in the olden times; in the days of Jesus there were wolves prowling about over the wild hills round Bethlehem, always ready to pounce on the sheep at night.

As the shepherds watched their flocks, guarding them through the long, quiet hours of that night in which Jesus was born, they had a great fright.

An angel stood by them, and a great light shone round about them.

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see, I bring you news, news full of great delight. To-day, in the city of David, a Saviour is born for you — Christ the Lord."

Then the angel went on to tell the shepherds how they were to find the Saviour. They were to look for a baby wrapped up and lying in a manger.

Suddenly the angel was joined by a great host of his companions. They were singing, and this was their song:

"Glory to God in the highest places,

And on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased."

When the angels were gone away, and all was still again, and the shepherds only saw the quiet stars overhead shining down on them from God's heaven, they said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

They started out in haste, for they were very eager to find the Saviour, whom they had been taught to expect God would send them about this time. They came to the inn stable, and there they saw the babe in the manger as the angel had said. Then they told of what they had seen and heard in the fields, and the people of Bethlehem were astonished; but Mary kept all these things in her mind, pondering them; and the shepherds went back full of gladness, praising God.

CHAPTER IV

THE TWO DOVES

It was a law among the Jews that when a child was born the mother should make a sacrifice to God. If she could afford it, she was to offer a lamb ; but if she was too poor for that, she might bring two doves. Mary brought the gift of a poor woman ; she came up to the temple with two doves. It was also the law that some money should be paid at the temple when a first boy-child was born, as a sign that he belonged to God. Mary brought this money, together with the doves.

Now, in the temple were some old people who spent all their time there, giving themselves up to the praise and worship of God. It had been revealed to one of them, named Simeon — a good old man, whose heart was full of the Spirit of God — that he should not die till he had seen the Lord's Christ. When the child Jesus was brought into the temple by His parents, Simeon took Him in his arms, saying,

“Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord,
According to Thy word, in peace ;
For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.”

He was ready to die now that he had seen Jesus, the promised Christ of God.

While Joseph and Mary were wondering at this, Simeon blessed them ; but he also warned Mary that trouble would come to her when many people turned against her Son. It would be like a sword piercing her soul.

Another of these old people in the temple was a prophetess named Anna. She had been married for seven years when her husband died ; and after that she had lived as a widow for as many as eighty-four years, so she must have been a very old woman indeed. She was accustomed to live in the temple, worshipping God with prayers and fastings night and day.

Anna, the old prophetess, came up just when Simeon was holding the child in his arms, and she, too, gave thanks to God. Then she went to other people, who, as she knew, were waiting and watching for the coming of the deliverance of God, and told them of the child she had seen in the temple.

CHAPTER V

THE MAGI

FROM very ancient times there had been living in the East, especially in the neighbourhood of Babylon and Persia, men who studied the stars, and so laid the foundations of the science of astronomy. But they had mixed this true knowledge with strange fancies about the influence of the heavenly bodies on the lives of men and women. In this way came astrology as one of the magic arts. It was held that the position of the stars at the birth of a child determined what his fortune was to be. The learned men of Persia who studied such subjects were called "Magi." In the more ancient times these Magi were honoured as forming a peculiar order almost like the priests among the Jews. But by the time of Christ this was no longer the case. Still there were men who gathered up the wisdom of their fathers, and who also watched the heavens for themselves.

The story of the Magi tells how some of these people came from far to see the infant Jesus. It has been imagined that there were three of them, that their home was Arabia, that they were kings. They have even been named and described as Melchior, an old man with long white hair and a sweep-

ing beard ; Caspar, a beardless youth with a ruddy face ; and Balthasar, with the black skin of an African. All this is imaginary. The story as we have it in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the only place where it is found in the New Testament, simply tells how some Magi, we do not know how many, came from "the East," we do not know exactly where.

These men had heard that a great king of the Jews was to appear about this time. A Latin writer tells us that there was spread all through the East an expectation that some great one would arise. When they saw a star, which they took to be a sign of the birth of the king, the Magi followed the direction of this star till they came to Jerusalem. There they sought out Herod, the reigning king, and asked him where they were to find the child who was born to be king of the Jews. Herod turned for advice to the learned Jews about him, and these men found an old prophecy, from which they learnt that the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem.

So the Magi set out for Bethlehem, and, as they went on their way, they were delighted to see their star again, and they followed it till it stood over the house where the young child was. When they had found the child, they gave Him presents of gold and precious spices.

Herod was a cruel tyrant. He had a rival of his beheaded, and two young men of whom he

was jealous strangled; he had his brother-in-law drowned in a bath at Jericho, and even one of his wives killed. The older he lived the more gloomy and suspicious, the more cruel and terrible he became. Now he had asked the Magi to come and tell him where they found the young child, that he might go and offer Him homage. But since they were warned in a dream to do no such thing, they went home quietly without returning to the king.

This greatly enraged Herod, and he ordered all the baby boys under two years old in and about Bethlehem to be killed. Joseph was warned of the danger in a dream, and he fled with the young child and His mother into Egypt, where they stayed till Herod was dead, when they would have gone back to Bethlehem; but on hearing that Herod's son, who took after his father, was now ruling, they went to Nazareth.

CHAPTER VI

THE BOY IN THE TEMPLE

EVERY year Jesus' parents used to go up to Jerusalem to a great feast of the Jews called "The Passover." When Jesus was twelve years old they took Him with them for the first time. They travelled with their friends in a great company. In this way the members of a family might very easily get separated from one another.

When it was time to start back on the journey to Nazareth, the boy Jesus was missing. But as His parents thought He was somewhere in the crowd, they set out without Him.

So they travelled for the first day's journey; and at night they looked for Him among their friends and relations, quite expecting to see Him. He was not there. Naturally they were alarmed, and they turned back to Jerusalem to look for Him.

This took another day, and then they had a weary search through the narrow streets and crowded bazaars of the great city. In all that moving sea of strange faces they looked in vain for the one face they hungered after. And so again a day passed. This was the third day since His parents had last seen Jesus. How tired and dis-

tressed they must have been! No doubt they blamed themselves now for having started without their child.

At length they went into the temple. Now it was the custom for learned Jews, called Rabbis, to teach their pupils in the courts and porticos round about the temple. Sometimes they had open classes, which anybody might attend without becoming a regular pupil. The Rabbi would sit on a carpet spread on the ground, cross-legged, as perhaps you have seen a tailor sit at his work, and his scholars would sit on the same carpet in a circle about him. The Rabbis would put questions to their classes, and they liked their scholars to put questions to them.

To their astonishment Joseph and Mary found their lost child in one of these classes of the rabbis at the temple. Never was there so eager a scholar. Everybody, teacher and taught, was astonished at Him — He put such searching questions; He gave such startling answers!

But His mother was vexed at what she saw; partly, perhaps, because He seemed so happy in the busy studies of the class, while she and Joseph were hot and tired and flustered from their vain hunt up and down the streets.

So she cried, "Child, why have you treated us in this way? See, your father and I have been looking for you with sorrowing hearts."

But Jesus answered, "How is it that you were

seeking for Me? Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?"

This, then, was the explanation. Jesus had not been thoughtless or unkind. He had taken it for granted that His parents would have guessed where He was. What was more natural to Jesus, who always lived in the joy of His Father's presence, than that He should be in His Father's house? But even Mary did not really understand her wonderful Son.

Still, though He was the Son of God, and though His Father's house was His true home, Jesus went quietly back to Nazareth with His earthly parents, and lived in obedience to them.

II

JESUS THE PROPHET

CHAPTER I

THE BAPTISM

WHEN John, the son of Zacharias the priest and Elisabeth his wife, grew up to be a man, he took to strange ways of living. He went away into the wild country, among the rocks and the caves where bears and jackals had their dens. He did not dress like other Jews, in a long white tunic and rich-coloured cloak. He wore a very rough mantle woven from camel's hair, like a piece of sackcloth, the sort of stuff the Arabs use for covering their tents. And for food he just had whatever he could find in the wild country—honey from the bees that built their combs in cracks of the rocks or hollow trees, and even insects—locusts, like our grasshoppers.

People used to go out from all parts to see this strange man. Then he would preach to them, and what he said was very startling. He told them that the Kingdom of God, which some of them had heard of, and some of them had read about, as

coming in the wonderful future, was close at hand. And he said Someone was coming after him, so great a person that John was not worthy to unbuckle His sandal. Then he went on to say that they must be prepared for all this by leaving their bad ways and turning their minds to better things. He would get very fierce in his



ARAB SANDALS

preaching, calling his hearers "an offspring of vipers." He said that the axe was already lying at the root of the tree, and that every tree that was not bringing forth good fruit would be cut down and thrown into the fire.

This very much frightened the people. So they cried out, "What must we do?"

John answered, "He that has two coats, let him give to him that has none ; and he that has food, let him also share it."

Taxgatherers, who used to be hard on the people, cheating and robbing them, came, asking, "Master, what shall we do?"

John answered, "Don't force people to pay more than is due from them."

Soldiers came, saying, "And we, what must we do?"

"Do not be rough and violent," said John ; "do not accuse people falsely ; be content with your wages."

John took those people who wished to be prepared for the coming of the Kingdom of God down to the River Jordan, and there he baptized them, as a sign that they wished their sins to be washed away. To baptize means to wash in a religious service and as a sign. Because John did this he was called "The Baptist," that is, "The Washer."

Among the many people who came to John to be baptized by him was Jesus. Now, John did not know that Jesus was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, the very Person whose coming he had preached about. But he knew something of Him. We read in the stories of their childhood how they were distant relations, cousins of some degree, and how their two mothers knew one another and had met. At all events, John knew enough about Jesus to feel that He did not need the washing of repentance.

But Jesus made John baptize Him, to show that He, too, wished to belong to the Kingdom.

Then they both went into the water, and John baptized Jesus. As He was coming up from the water Jesus saw a vision—it looked like the sky being torn open, and the Spirit of God coming through and descending on Him like a dove, while a voice came out of the sky, saying, “Thou art My beloved Son ; in Thee I have been well pleased.”

CHAPTER II

THE TEMPTATION

IF you were to go to the valley of the Jordan, near to where the city of Jericho stood in the olden times, and then look up one night to the mountains behind which the sun had set, you would see lights twinkling here and there in what had seemed in the daytime a wild and desolate region. They are the lights of the hermits, who live in caves among these mountains, because it has been supposed that this is the very place where Jesus went directly after His baptism.

The Spirit of God, that came upon Him as He went up with John the Baptist from the Jordan, drove Him into the wild country. There He was for forty days without food. This country is the haunt of wild beasts, and Jesus lived among them. They found that He had not come, as other men came, to hunt and kill them. He was so gentle; they could not long be afraid of Him. But it was a hard and terrible time for Jesus, and dark thoughts came into His mind.

In His baptism Jesus had publicly given Himself to the service of God. We may suppose He would want to think out the course of His great life-work. After we have given ourselves to God, it is right

and necessary that we should have a quiet meditation by ourselves to consider the best way of living to His glory.

But it was the Spirit of God in Jesus that drove Him into the desert. He had new gifts and new powers. How should He use them? That is a question that comes with all new gifts and powers.

Now, new powers mean new temptations, because they may all be used in wrong ways. Jesus knew He was to be the Messiah, the Christ, the promised King and Saviour. How should He win His throne? How should He reign over His kingdom? There were worldly and wicked ways of reaching the ends before Him, such as kings and conquerors usually took. They seemed the easiest ways, and Jesus was tempted to follow them.

Then the presence of the Spirit of God in Him was to help Him to do most wonderful things. It seemed as though He might make some of these serve Him very easily.

So the spirit of evil that we call Satan, the spirit that comes to us all, and whispers wicked thoughts and desires in our hearts, came to Jesus in the lonely desert, where He had no friends, and brought plans of evil to His mind.

After His long fasting, Jesus had a great craving for food. Hungry men are tantalized in their imagination with fancy pictures of feasts. The stones on the mountain-side looked to the hungry Jesus like loaves of bread.

Then the wicked spirit said, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves."

If Jesus had done so, He would have worked a wonder for His own comfort. He felt that to do so would be to spoil His life and work.

So He answered by quoting Scripture, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Then the evil spirit made Him fancy Himself on a high tower of the temple at Jerusalem, and the voice of vanity urged Him to fling Himself down, trusting that God would take care of Him. The first temptation was to do the best He could for Himself; this second temptation was just of the opposite kind—to trust God in a foolish and wrong way. It was backed up with a text of Scripture; for even the Bible may be used to teach error and tempt to sin, if texts are taken out of their right sense and connection.

Jesus saw through the deception, and answered, "Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Once more the wicked spirit tempted Him. Jesus seemed to be on a high mountain from which he could see all the kingdoms of the world, and all their wealth and splendour.

The tempter said, "All these will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

This temptation was for Jesus to get power and

riches in wicked ways. To do so is to worship the devil.

Jesus knew it, and He answered angrily, "Away with you, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Then the bad, tempting spirit left Jesus, and good spirits from God came to Him, filling His mind with holy and peaceful thoughts, and comforting Him.

CHAPTER III

JESUS IN HIS OWN COUNTRY

SOON after this, John the Baptist was seized and shut up in the dungeon of a gloomy castle far away by the Dead Sea, because he had spoken strong words against the wickedness of King Herod and his queen. Then Jesus began to preach, taking up John's work just where it had been stopped. It almost looked as though He were to be John's successor, like Elisha following Elijah, for He began by repeating John's message. But He went up north out of the reach of the king, and before long He began a new teaching of His own. There was so much freshness and power in His speech that crowds gathered about Him, charmed with the wonderful words that fell from His lips. They said, "What is this? A new teaching! and full of power!"

So Jesus went about among the towns and villages of the north country of the Jews, called Galilee, preaching the good news of the coming Kingdom of God; and, besides this, doing what John had never attempted, healing the sick with a touch or even a word, so that wherever He went people were bringing out the sufferers on their beds for Him to cure them.

In His travels Jesus came to His own town of

Nazareth. One Saturday — the Sabbath of the Jews — He went into the synagogue according to His custom in the old quiet days. There was no regular minister to take the service. It was usual for the person in charge, one of the principal Jews — the “rulers” they called them — to ask anybody whom he thought suitable to take part in the service. So when they had read the first lesson, which was from the Pentateuch — that is, a volume made up of the Old Testament books from Genesis to Deuteronomy — Jesus stood up as a sign that He would like to read the second lesson. No doubt the ruler had been told about His great work in the villages, and so had the people, and they were naturally curious to hear the voice of their townsman who had become so unexpectedly famous. For the second lesson the roll of the prophets was handed to Him. Jesus unrolled it till He came to the part of Isaiah where it is written about the Spirit of God coming on Someone to help Him to declare a most beautiful message. This prophecy told how the Spirit had come because the mysterious person referred to had been “anointed” — that is, *chosen by God* — and set apart, to “preach good news to the poor.” And what was the good news? It was news of liberty to captives, sight for the blind, the coming of God’s year of grace.

Jesus closed the book, gave it back to the servant in charge, and sat down to preach. Then all the

people in the synagogue fixed their eyes on Him as He began to say, "To-day you have heard this scripture fulfilled."

What did He mean? He was explaining how it was that He, a quiet working-man for so many years, Whom they all knew so well, had received the Spirit of God, because He had been anointed, or chosen, by God to bring about the realizing of this old, venerable promise. He knew that this was why the Spirit had come on Him after His baptism; and He wanted His own townsfolk to have a share in the good time coming.

But they were dreadfully jealous. They could not believe it. They thought He was making too much of Himself. "Is not this the carpenter?" they said. When Jesus saw them growing restless and angry, He changed the style of His address altogether, and reminded them how both Elijah and Elisha had turned from the unbelieving Jews and brought God's blessing to heathen people—the widow of Sidon, Naaman the Syrian. This enraged the people of Nazareth, and they rose up in a fury and dragged Him out of the synagogue to throw Him over the cliff on which their city stood.

Now a strange thing happened. There must have been something most wonderful in the quiet dignity of Christ, in the real majesty of His Spirit. It must have been this that overawed His townsfolk at the last moment, for they let Him pass away out of their midst unharmed.

CHAPTER IV

THE FISHERMEN

As the people of His own town had turned against Him, and even meant to kill Him, Jesus left that place and went to live at another place, Capernaum, a town on the shore of the inland lake known as the Sea of Galilee. This was a great change. Nazareth is a highland town up among the mountains; the Sea of Galilee is in a deep valley six hundred feet lower than the level of the Mediterranean Sea. At the time of Jesus there were villages and towns all round it, and swarms of boats were busy sailing to and fro over the lake. Capernaum was close down by the shore. Looked at across the blue waters, with its white houses gleaming among gardens and orchards, and the rocky hills rising behind, it must have been a lovely spot. And yet it must have been a very unhealthy place, hot and steamy. It was not for its pretty scenery that Jesus went to live by the lake, though He loved the beauty of nature. No doubt His reason was that here He could meet with the sort of people He could best make disciples of.

Once when the crowds came round Him in such numbers that there was quite a crush, He saw two empty boats drawn up by the lake. The fishermen had gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

He got into one of the boats which belonged to a man named Simon, and asked him to push out a little into the water. Simon did so, and then Jesus preached to the people from the boat. Afterwards He said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down your nets for fishing."

Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing; but at your word I will let down the nets."

When they had done so they caught a host of fishes, so that their nets were breaking. And they beckoned to their partners in the other boats to come and help them. There were so many fishes they filled both boats, so that they were almost swamped.

Simon was amazed at the sight, and so were those who were with him, and he fell down on his knees before Jesus, saying, "Leave me; for I am a sinful man, Lord."

And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; after this you shall catch men."

So Jesus called Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter, which means "Rock," and also his brother Andrew, to follow Him; and then He called their partners, who were two brothers named James and John. They all four left their boats and their homes, and followed Jesus wherever He went. These fishermen were His first constant followers. We might say they were the beginning of the Church of Christ.



FISHERMAN CASTING A NET



CHAPTER V

HIS WONDERFUL WORKS OF HEALING

WHEREVER He went Jesus found sick people to heal; and often great numbers of them, suffering from all kinds of complaints, were brought to Him, and He perfectly cured them all.

When He had called Simon and Andrew to follow Him, Simon took Him to his house. There they found Simon's wife's mother ill with fever. The people of the house told Him about her at once. Jesus came to her, and took her by the hand and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she waited on them. That evening a host of sick people were brought to Simon's door, and Jesus healed them all. The next day He got up very early, before it was light, and went into a desert place to pray. When His friends found Him He said, "Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there too."

So they started on their travels. On the way they met a miserable creature, covered over with sores and white scabs. He was what they call a "leper." People shrank from lepers, and would not go near them, they looked such horrible objects. When this poor leper saw Jesus, he ran to Him and

kneeled down before Him saying, "If you will you can make me clean."

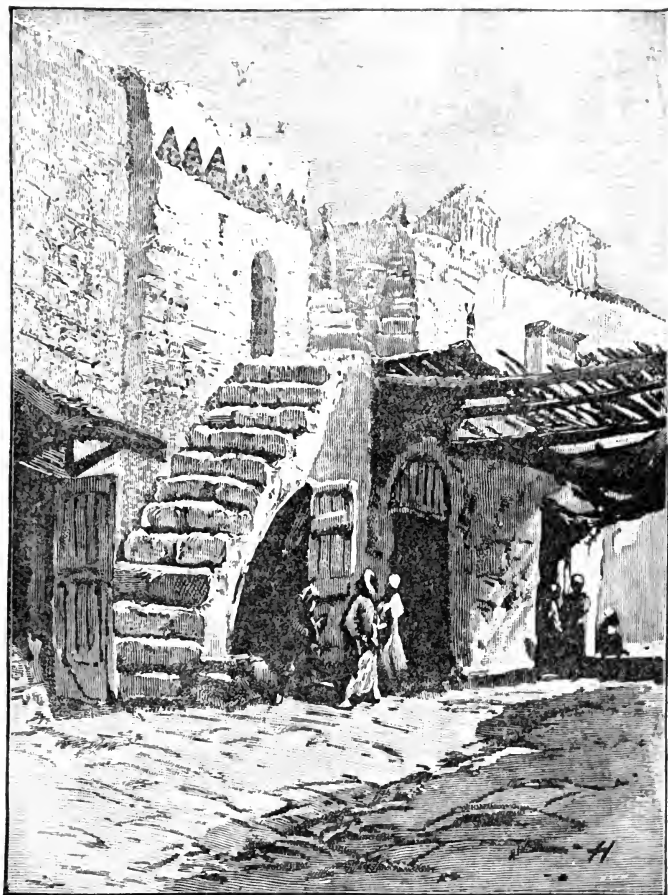
Jesus was moved with a deep pity, and stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be made clean." Immediately the disease left him, and he was made clean. But now, because Jesus had touched a leper, men would say that He was unclean. So He had to keep out in desert places for a time. But the people came to Him from all parts.

When He came back to Capernaum, and it had got abroad that He was in a house, a great crowd gathered together so that there was no more room, not even about the door, and He preached to them. Presently four men came up, carrying on a mattress a man who was paralyzed, and had lost the power of his limbs. When they found they could not get in because of the crowd, they went up an outside staircase to the top of the house, took off part of the roof, and let the man down into the midst of the people where Jesus was preaching.

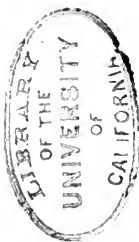
Jesus, seeing the faith they had to take so much trouble in bringing the paralyzed man to Him, said to the poor sufferer, "Child, your sins are forgiven you." This very much shocked some teachers of religion called "Scribes," who were standing by.

"Why does this man speak so?" they said. "He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but One—God?"

Though they only said this quietly among themselves, Jesus understood what they were saying.



OUTSIDE STAIRS



So He turned to them and said, "Why do you reason these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralyzed man, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Arise, and take up your bed and walk? But to show that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins"—then He turned to the paralyzed man, and spoke directly to him—"I say to you, Arise, take up your bed, and go home."

And he arose, and took up his mattress at once, and went out in the sight of all the people, so that they were amazed, and praised God, saying, "We never saw things happening in this way before."

CHAPTER VI

HOW JESUS GAVE OFFENCE

AFTER Jesus had called the four fishermen to follow Him He went on to gather other followers. Thus, once He was in the very busiest part of the town, where merchants and pedlars paid the taxes on their wares as they passed through. Jesus saw one of the tax-collectors, named Matthew, sitting at his work, and said to him, "Follow Me."

Then Matthew gave up his office, and made a great feast for his friends, and invited Jesus there. Now the Jews disliked the tax-gatherers, because they collected money for the foreign Roman government that had conquered their land some years before, and because they were thought to cheat for their own advantage. Still, Jesus went to the feast. The people who were most strict in their religious ways were called Pharisees. The word means "separated people"; they kept apart from other people, making themselves out to be better.

Some of these Pharisees, and some of the teachers of religion, the Scribes, were very much shocked at Jesus going to eat with tax-gatherers.

When Jesus heard of this He said, "They that are healthy do not need a physician, but they that

are sick; I came not to call good people, but sinners."

Jesus often shocked these strict people who thought themselves so good. It was not that He was easy and careless; He hated sin, and loved real goodness far more than they did. But they were fussy about little things, though they did not practise real goodness; and they were harsh and unjust in judging other people, while Jesus was reasonable and kind. Jesus saw that His teaching would never agree with the teaching of the religious people of His day. He said that nobody would patch an old garment with an unshrunk piece of cloth, for if it were done the shrinking of the new would tear the old, and nobody would put new wine into old wine-skins, or the wine-skins would burst, and the wine be spilt. He meant that His teaching was so new and so different from what went before that both would be spoilt if they were joined together so that what He taught was forced into old forms and customs.

Then Jesus gave offence because He and His disciples did not observe the endless rules about washing, not for cleanliness, but just for a religious form; and because they did not fast as a duty. But the greatest offence was in the matter of the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath was the principal thing in religion with these strict Jews, and they took it to mean doing nothing on that day that might be called work. Once, when Jesus and His

disciples were going through the cornfields, they began to make a way for themselves by gathering the ears of corn and eating it. This was often done, and nobody objected to it in itself. But the strict people were shocked at its being done on the Sabbath. Then Jesus said, "The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Another Sabbath, when Jesus saw a man with a withered arm in the synagogue, He said to him, "Stretch out your arm."

The man did so, and it was quite healed. This offended the strict people more than ever, so that they began to plot against Jesus to put Him to death.

CHAPTER VII

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

WHEN Jesus had quite a number of people who liked to learn of Him, He selected twelve of them to be always with Him, and to be specially trained to carry on His work. They came to be called "Apostles." The name means the same as our word "missionaries" — people sent out. Jesus took His twelve Apostles away from the multitude of people who were always crowding about Him round the lake into a quiet place up among the mountains, and there He gave them some special teaching. He began by saying who were the really happy people —

"Happy are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Happy are they that hunger and thirst after goodness: for they shall be filled.

Happy are the merciful: for they shall receive mercy.

Happy are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Happy are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

Happy are they that have been ill-treated because of their goodness: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Then He said His followers must go beyond the teaching of the Old Testament. That had, "Thou

shalt not kill." Jesus taught that to hate our brother is to murder him in our thoughts. And He added that if we have quarrelled with our brother we must be reconciled with him before we come to the worship of God. It used to be said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"—



A PHARISEE PRAYING AT THE CORNER

the old law of revenge. This Jesus put an end to, teaching His people not to bear a grudge, but to love their enemies.

Then He taught them not to make a show of their religion — when they gave to the poor, not to sound a trumpet before them; when they prayed, not to stand at the street-corner to be seen by men, as some

were proud to do. "But thou, when thou prayest," He said, "enter into thy inner chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." Jesus gave them this model prayer :

"Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil."

He told them not to lay up for themselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal, but to lay up treasures in heaven. He said, "No man can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon" (that is, riches). And He told them not to be anxious for the morrow — "See the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap or gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of much more value than they? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say to you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Then He taught them not to judge others, and not to look out for their faults. "Why," He said, "do you look at the speck of dust in your brother's eye, and do not notice the beam that is in your own eye?"

He went on to encourage them to pray, saying, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father that is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

Jesus gave His friends the golden rule — "As you would that men should do to you, do you also to them." Many other great and wise teachings He gave them, and then He finished with these words about two houses :

"Everybody who hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like. He is like a man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation on the rock; and when there was a flood, the stream broke against that house, and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But he who hears and does not, is like a man that built a house upon the earth without a foundation; against which the stream broke, and immediately it fell in; and the ruin of that house was great."

These are some of the things that Jesus said to

His twelve Apostles, when He had them by themselves among the mountains in a lonely place. But they have been treasured up for all time, and they are the best of all the teachings we can listen to to-day.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WILD MAN AMONG THE TOMBS

WHEN Jesus had been teaching and healing the great crowds that came to Him, He was very tired. So His friends took Him in a boat across the lake. Suddenly a storm came on, and even the fishermen were frightened. But Jesus was asleep on a cushion in the stern. They woke Him, saying, "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?"

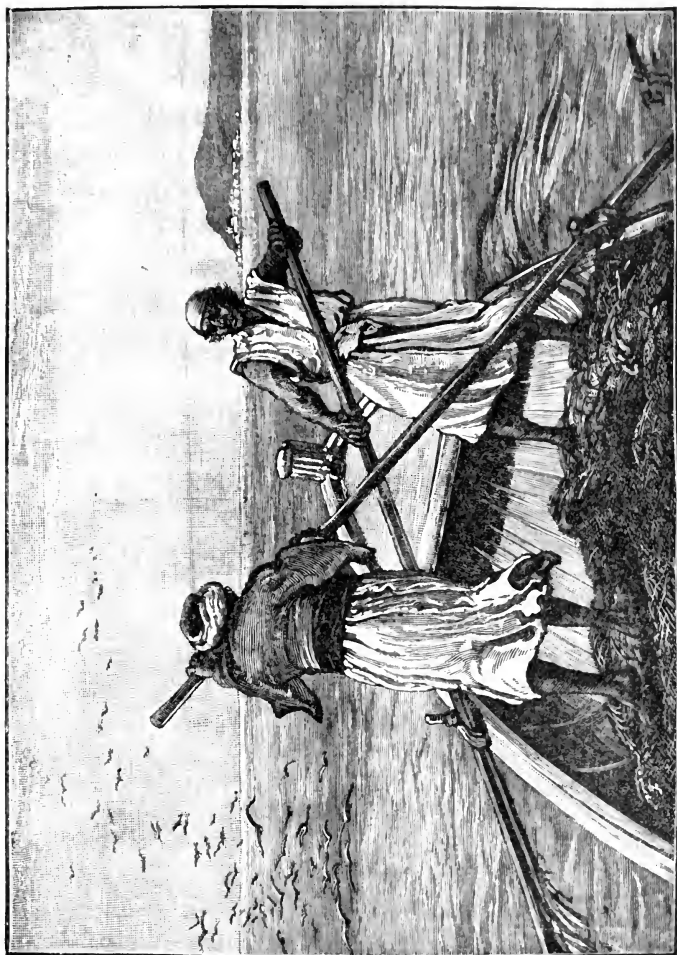
Then He rose and said to the waves, "Peace, be still."

And the wind dropped, and there was a great calm.

And He said to them, "Why are you frightened; have you not yet faith?"

Jesus had such faith in the care of His Father, He could sleep right through a storm.

On the other side they saw a wild man who lived in the cave-tombs. He was mad; he thought there was a whole regiment of demons in him. He was so strong that, though he had been chained, he had broken his fetters, and he had torn off his clothes. There he was among the tombs, night and day cutting himself with stones and yelling aloud. When he saw Jesus, he ran and fell down before Him. Jesus commanded the evil spirit to come out of Him.



BOATMEN ON THE SEA OF GALILEE



Part of the story is very strange and difficult to understand. It tells how the demons asked to be allowed to go into a herd of swine, and how Jesus permitted them, and then how the herd rushed down a steep place and were drowned in the lake. But the best of it is that Jesus cured the miserable man, and left him clothed and in his right mind.

CHAPTER IX

STORIES OF A LITTLE GIRL AND A WIDOW'S SON

WHEN Jesus got back to Capernaum, He found a man named Jāirus, one of the principal people at the synagogue, waiting for Him.

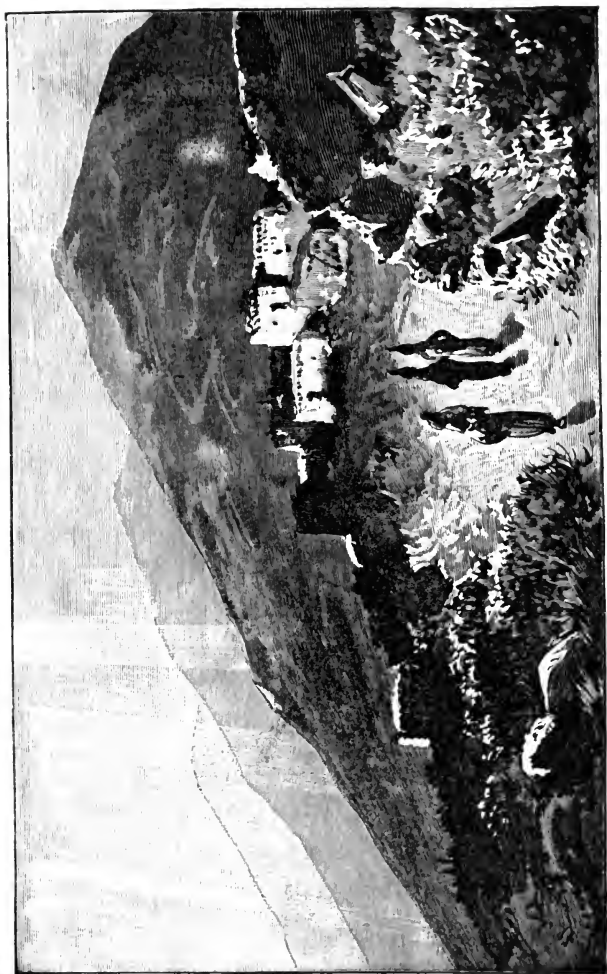
As soon as he saw Jesus, Jāirus fell at His feet and begged Him very earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. I pray you come and lay your hands on her, that she may be healed and live."

Jesus started off at once. There was a great crowd about Him, and in the crowd a woman who was ill crept up behind Him, and just touched the fringe of His cloak. "For," she said to herself, "if I only touch the fringe of His cloak, I shall be made well." And directly she touched it she felt herself cured.

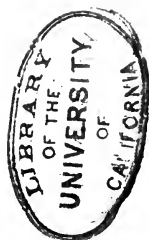
But Jesus, finding in Himself that healing power had gone out of Him, turned and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

When He looked round to see who had done it, the woman came, full of fear and trembling, and fell at His feet, and told Him the truth.

And Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has cured you; go in peace, and be healed of your plague."



NAIN



While He was speaking, they came from the house of Jāirus, saying, "Your daughter is dead ; why do you trouble the Teacher any more?"

But Jesus said, "Fear not, only believe."

When they came to the house they found the hired mourners playing flutes and howling. Jesus was vexed, and He said, "Why do you make this noise? The child is not dead. She is asleep."

Then they laughed and mocked at Him, for they knew she was dead. But Jesus, putting all the strangers out, took with Him only the father and mother of the child and Peter, James, and John, and went into the room where the child was. Taking her by the hand, He said in the language of the country, "*Talitha cumi*," which means, "Little maid, arise."

And immediately she rose up and walked. Then He told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were amazed, as well they might be ; but Jesus commanded them to tell nobody what had been done.

We read in the Gospels of two other cases in which Jesus raised the dead.

One of these is that of the widow's son. It is found in the Gospel of Luke. As Jesus was drawing near to the gate of a little city called Nain, He met a funeral coming out. It was a particularly sad funeral, for they were going to bury the only son of a widow. Now his mother was left quite alone in the world, and as she went along she wept aloud,

for her heart was broken. When Jesus saw her, He was moved with deep feeling for her, and He said to her, "Do not weep."

Then He came near and touched the bier on which they were carrying the dead man. There was no coffin, only a cloth thrown over him. The men who were carrying him stood still, and Jesus said, "Young man, I say to you, **ARISE!**"

Immediately, he sat up and began to speak. Everybody was very much frightened at the sight, but they praised God for the great wonder.

The third case in which Jesus raised the dead is that of Lazarus. The story is told us by John, and we will take his stories together.

CHAPTER X

THE WOMAN WHO WASHED THE FEET OF JESUS WITH HER TEARS

A PHARISEE once asked Jesus to dine with Him. Jesus went, for He was always ready to be friendly to those who would show the least friendliness to Him. But the Pharisee was an ill-mannered host, as this story will show.

In the time of Jesus, the Jews used to sit at table on couches, leaning on their left elbow, and with their feet out behind. When Jesus was like this at the Pharisee's table, a woman who had lived a sad life, and who bore a bad character, came behind Him with a flask of ointment. Stooping over His feet, she burst into tears; then she washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. She kissed His feet over and over again, and lastly she poured the ointment from her flask on them.

This very much shocked the Pharisee, and he said, "If this man were a prophet, He would have found out what a bad woman she is who is touching Him."

Jesus said, "Simon" — for that was the Pharisee's name (not Simon Peter, of course, but another Simon) — "Simon, I have something to say to you."

"Go on, Teacher," said Simon.

"A certain money-lender had two debtors. One owed him five hundred shillings, the other fifty.

When they had nothing to pay with, he forgave them both. Which of them, therefore, will love him most?"

Simon answered, "He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most."

Jesus said, "You judge rightly." Then turning to the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house; you gave me no water for my feet; but she has washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss; but she ever since I came in has not left off kissing my feet over and over again. You did not even anoint my head with oil; she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, that person loves little."

And He said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

The people who were sitting with Him at the Pharisee's table said, "Who is this that even forgives sins?"

Jesus took no notice of them. He only spoke to the woman again, and said, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

CHAPTER XI

WONDERS IN THE DESERT AND ON THE SEA

THE more Jesus went about preaching and healing the greater the crowds were that needed help. He was full of pity for them. They were distressed and scattered like sheep without a shepherd. So He divided the work with His twelve apostles, sending them out two and two in various directions ; and they went about preaching that people should turn from their sins and prepare for the coming of the kingdom of heaven ; and as they went they cast out many evil spirits, and anointed many sick people with oil, and healed them.

When they came back to Jesus they told Him all they had done. And He said, "Come by yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile."

So He went with them across the lake to the quiet, lonely hills on the other side. But the people were still so eager they would not let them alone. They followed round the shore and met them on the other side. Jesus had too much pity for them to refuse to work among them again ; and He set Himself to teach them many things out there in the wild country. As the day was wearing away He was still preaching, and the people were still eagerly hanging on His words. By this time they were getting

faint and hungry, and that in a very lonely place far away from houses and shops. The disciples began to get anxious, and they came to Jesus to ask Him to send the people away to the villages round about to buy themselves something to eat.

But Jesus said, "Do you give them some food."

They answered, "Shall we go and buy two hundred shillings' worth of bread to feed them?"

"How many loaves have you?" He asked. "Go and see."

When they had found out they said, "Five, and two fishes."

Then Jesus had the people arranged in orderly lines of hundreds and fifties. Now it was the spring-time, when the grass which is burnt brown for most of the year is growing up fresh after the rain; and as the people sat in their bright-coloured clothes in regular order on the green grass, it all seemed to Peter like beds of flowers in a well-kept garden.

Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to the blue sky overhead, He gave thanks to God. Then He broke the loaves and handed the pieces to His apostles, and they took the food round to the people. Everybody had as much as he could eat, although it was reckoned that there were as many as five thousand men; there were even twelve baskets full of broken pieces left over.

When Jesus had sent the crowds away, and made His apostles get into the little ship and sail off, He went alone up into a mountain to pray. But pres-

ently He saw that the wind was against them, and that they were distressed with rowing. So He came to them over the water. They were terrified at the sight of Him. They thought it must be a ghost. As He seemed to be passing by them they cried out for fear. But the next moment they heard the voice of Jesus coming over the water, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

Then He came up to them into the boat; the wind dropped; and they soon reached the place for which they were making.

These are indeed wonderful narratives. We cannot even picture to our minds what Jesus did to make the food enough for all.

III

JESUS THE KING

CHAPTER I

AMONG THE HEATHEN

WE now come to a great change in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen Him going about among crowds of people, speaking to them like a prophet, and healing their sick, and doing other wonders. But from the time we have come to He lived a quiet life in very out-of-the-way places.

I must tell you how this came about. You will remember that the strict religious people and the teachers of religion had been offended at Jesus, and had turned against Him and begun to plot for His death. The chief of the Jews sent down spies to Galilee to watch Him. But the worst thing was that the people of the towns and villages who had lately flocked to hear Him were disappointed with Him. If He had come out as a fighting leader against the government of Rome, and offered to be the king of the Jews, that would have delighted them immensely, and they would have gathered round Him for a mad insurrection. But He did

nothing of the kind. And some of His sayings were very hard to follow. Then many who had been His disciples fell away and left Him.

Jesus set out with the faithful few who still clung to Him, when so many of His old followers had fallen off, and travelled right up to the heathen country by the shore of the Mediterranean Sea over the borders of Tyre and Sidon. He went into a house and did not wish it to be known that He was there. But the fame of Him had reached even this distant place. A woman whose little daughter was very much afflicted had heard about Him. She was not a Jewess ; she was a native of the heathen country. Still she prayed Jesus to come and heal the child.

Jesus made an answer that does not read at all like Him. "Let the children first be fed," He said, "for it is not fit to take the children's bread and throw it to dogs."

The Jews called the heathen dogs. But you may be sure Jesus did not think of them in so unkind a way. Still, during His life on earth His work was among the Jews ; and perhaps He spoke as He did to the poor, troubled woman to see what she was like, and if she could still believe in Him when He seemed unkind.

She answered, "Yes, Sir, but even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

It was a clever answer, and a brave one too, and full of hope. She would not give up ; for you see she was a mother. Jesus was very pleased with her

answer, and He told her that for the sake of that saying her daughter was cured. When she went home she found the child lying on her bed at rest and cured.

After this Jesus went down to the half-heathen country on the east of the sea of Galilee. There He worked very few miracles, and these seemed to come with difficulty, not at all like His earlier miracles, perhaps because there was not much faith in Him now among the people.

Once they brought Him a deaf and dumb man, and begged Him to lay His hand on him. Jesus took the man aside from the people, and put His fingers in his ears, and spat, and touched his tongue. Then He looked up to heaven, and sighed, and said, "Ephthatha!" — which means, "Be opened."

The man's ears were opened, and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak plainly.

About this time they brought a blind man to Jesus, and begged Him to touch him. Jesus took the man by the hand and led him out of the village. When He had spit on his eyes and laid His hands on them, He asked him, "Do you see anything?"

The man looked up and said, "I see the men! They look like trees walking!"

Jesus laid His hands on him again; and he looked hard, and at last he got his sight perfect.

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT QUESTION

JESUS went again to the very borders of Palestine on the north, this time to the foot of the great snow-covered Mount Hermon, a mountain that is nearly ten thousand feet above the sea level; and he came to a new town, called Cæsarea—as a compliment to one of the Cæsars of Rome. At this place there were splendid villas and lovely gardens, and a heathen temple of Pan, the god of nature, by a cave where the River Jordan rushes out of the very heart of the mountain, maiden-hair ferns hanging over it, and then plunges into a thicket of green bushes. It is the most beautiful place in all Palestine.

When Jesus was here with His disciples, far away from His own country, and among signs of the pomp and splendour of heathenism, He put a great question to them. But first He asked, “Who do men say that I am?”

And they told Him, “Some John the Baptist, and others Elijah, and others one of the prophets,” for the Jews had a fancy that perhaps these great men might have come back from the dead.

Then Jesus asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” That was the great question for them.

Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

So Peter had found out the secret. Jesus had never told him. From living with Him and watching Him God had led Peter to see that Jesus, who went about like a poor man, was the promised Saviour; yes, that He was the SON OF GOD.

Jesus told His disciples not to tell anybody that He was the Christ. People would not understand. They would expect Him to be a king like David, and to fight against the Romans. But He had come to reign in the hearts of His people, and to fight against wickedness with the sword of truth.

Jesus then began to teach His disciples something they had never dreamed of, and which dreadfully frightened and distressed them. He said that He would have to suffer many things from the principal Jews, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Peter, suddenly seizing hold of Him, cried, "God have mercy on you! this shall never be!"

Now this word of His warm-hearted friend was really a temptation of the Evil Spirit, and Jesus knew it, so He cried out in anger, "Get you behind me, Satan."

Then He went on to say to all His disciples, "If any man wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; and whoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it."

Another time, a little later, when He was teaching His friends not to seek the best places for themselves, He said, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." So you see He taught that it was necessary He should die to do His great work of saving the world.

T

CHAPTER III

THE TRANSFIGURATION

SIX days after this Jesus took Peter and James and John up the great mountain apart by themselves. Then a marvellous thing happened. As He was praying His face was changed most gloriously and His clothes became white and dazzling. Two men were with Him talking about His death. They were Moses and Elijah, come from the world of spirits. Peter and James and John were very sleepy at the time. Still, they kept enough awake to see the bright light and the two men with Jesus.

And Peter said, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."

But he did not know what he was saying; they were all very much frightened. Next a cloud came over them, and a voice was heard out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son; hear Him." Suddenly, as they looked round, the strange sights had all vanished. There was only Jesus left.

When they came down from the mountain and drew near to the other disciples they saw a crowd, and the people all in confusion. Jesus asked what was the matter. One of the people in the crowd cried out, "Teacher, look on my son, I pray you,

for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him suddenly, and he becomes convulsed. He is pining away. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him."

And Jesus answered, "Oh, you unbelieving and perverse people. Bring him to me."

So they brought him. When he saw Jesus the poor boy fell down in a fit.

Jesus asked, "How long is it since this has come on him?"

"From a child; and often it has made him fall into the fire or the water. But now, if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us."

"If you can!" said Jesus. "All things are possible to him that believes."

The father cried out at once with tears, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

When Jesus saw the crowd gathering round angrily, he left off talking to the father, and turning to the boy, he said, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee come out of him, and enter no more into him."

With a great scream the boy fell on the ground in convulsions. Then he lay quite still like a dead child, so that the people said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him, and he stood up perfectly cured.

When Jesus was alone with His disciples, they asked Him, "Why could not we cast it out?"

He answered, "This can only be done by prayer."

CHAPTER IV

THE LOST SON

ALTHOUGH most of the people had now turned against Jesus, many of those who were despised and hated, the tax-gatherers and persons of bad character, drew near to listen to His preaching. This greatly offended the people who thought themselves very religious, and they complained, saying, "This man receives sinners, and eats with them."

But Jesus asked what man among them who had a hundred sheep, and lost one, would not leave the ninety-nine and go to seek the lost sheep, and when he had found it lay it on his shoulders with rejoicing? Or what woman having ten pieces of silver—women in the East carry their money as head ornaments—if she lost one would not sweep the house till she had found it? Now Jesus was just hunting for lost sheep and lost treasures. That was why He went about among these people of bad character.

To teach the same lesson He said, "A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your property that is coming to me.'"

"And the father divided his living among them.

"Not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far coun-

try; and there he wasted his property with riotous living. And when he had spent it all, there was a terrible famine in that country, and he began to be in want.

“And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into the fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have been filled with the bean pods that the swine were fed on, and nobody gave him anything.

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I am perishing here with hunger. I will arise, and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no more worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants.”’

“And he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still far off his father saw him, and was full of pity for him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

“And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no more worthy to be called your son.’

“But the father said to his slaves, ‘Bring out quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’

“And they began to be merry.

“Now his elder son was in the field ; and as he drew near the house he heard music and dancing. He called to him one of the slaves and asked what it all meant.

“And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come ; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.’

“But he was angry and would not go in. His father came out and coaxed him.

“But he answered, and said to his father, ‘See ! these many years I have been serving you, and I never disobeyed one of your orders ; and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours has come, who has been eating up your living with bad company, you killed the fatted calf for him !’

“And he said, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But it was fit to make merry and be glad ; for your brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.’”

CHAPTER V

THE TRAVELLER, THE ROBBERS, AND THE NEIGHBOUR

A LAWYER once stood up to ask Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life.

Jesus said, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?"

And he answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself."

"You have answered right," said Jesus; "do this, and you shall live."

But the lawyer wanted to get the best of the talk. So he went on and asked, "And who is my neighbour?"

Here is the answer Jesus made :

"A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him, and beat him, and went off, leaving him half dead.

"And it happened that a certain priest was going down that way, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.

"And in the same way a Levite"—that is one of the people appointed to wait on the priests in the temple—"when he came to the place and saw him passed by on the other side.

“But a certain Samaritan” — that is one of a race of people whom the Jews hated and despised — “as he journeyed came where the poor man was lying. And when he saw him he was full of pity for him. He went up to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine. Then he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two shillings, and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever you spend more, when I come back I will repay you.’ Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbour to him that fell among the robbers?”

“He that showed mercy on him,” said the lawyer.

Jesus said to him, “Go, and do likewise.”

It happened, a short time after this, that ten men who were lepers met Jesus. While they were a great way off they cried aloud, saying, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

When He saw them He said, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” For it was the law that when a leper was healed he must go to one of the priests to show that he was cured. As they went they were healed. Then one of them turned back and gave thanks to God with a loud voice, and he was a Samaritan.

Jesus said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?” You see, it was only the Samaritan, the despised stranger, who was thankful.



TRAVELLING WITH SCRIP AND GIRDLE



CHAPTER VI

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

AFTER Jesus had been travelling about in the most out-of-the-way places for some time, He passed through Galilee once more. But He did not wish anybody to know it, for He was teaching His disciples that He must be delivered up, and be killed, and rise again. They could not understand Him, but they were afraid to ask what He meant.

Jesus walked first, and His disciples walked behind Him. On the way He heard them quarrelling together. When they had reached Capernaum, and were in the house, He asked them what it was about. They were ashamed to answer; for they had been disputing as to which of them was the greatest. They knew this would grieve their Master, it was quite the opposite to His spirit. So they were silent.

But He could see what was the matter; so He said, "If any man wishes to be first, the way is to make himself last of all and servant of all."

To teach this lesson the better Jesus called a little child to Him. Children were never afraid of Jesus; and this child came to Him without fear. Jesus took him up and kissed and fondled him; and you may be sure the little fellow was as happy as he could be, nestling in the kind arms of Jesus. He had no idea what the great Teacher was talking

about ; he never guessed that he was there as an object-lesson to those big, grown-up men. If he had thought so it would have spoilt it all. But now Jesus held him up in the midst of them — this simple, trusting, little child — while He said, "Except you turn, and become as little children, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Then He went on to teach kindness to children. "Whoever," He said, "receives one such little child in My name is receiving Me. But," He added, "whoever makes one of these little ones, who trust in Me, go wrong, it would be well for him to have a great millstone hung about his neck, and for him to be sunk into the middle of the sea."

It was a little while after this, when Jesus was down in the south country, on the other side of the River Jordan, that the people brought their children to Jesus. Of course, you all know this story very well.

Jesus had just been teaching the people, and they were very interested in His answers to some puzzling questions. The coming of the children seemed a tiresome interruption. Some people always think children in the way. Jesus never thought so. Why not? For one thing, because He was full of love and kindness. And then there was something of the child in Jesus. A great poet has said, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

When you are no longer infants, when you are growing boys and girls in the school-room and at play, it is not so easy to keep near to heaven. But Jesus was always like the little child; heaven was always quite close to Him.

So when the disciples scolded the people who were bringing the children, for troubling Jesus, He was angry with them, and said, "Suffer the little children to come to Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Then He did more than was expected. Jewish mothers used to bring their children for learned rabbis to lay their hands on and bless. Jesus took these children up in His arms first, and then He put His hands on them and blessed them.

CHAPTER VII

THE VERY EAGER YOUNG MAN

JESUS was gradually working His way round towards Jerusalem, where He knew He was to die. As He came out of the quiet parts where He had been staying, and turned into the main road up to the city, there was a young man who had been waiting in the way for Him. Now, this was a very eager young man. Directly he saw Jesus he ran to meet Him, and fell down on his knees before Him, bursting out at once with the great question that he longed to have answered: "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Jesus said, "Why do you call me good? Nobody is good except one, that is God."

Jesus did not like to hear him using the word "good" so lightly. To be really good is the greatest of all things in the world. But it is the hardest, too. The very best people are ready to say, "Oh, no; we are not good. We are all sinners in the sight of God, and in our own consciences." Jesus was really good. He never had to own to sin. But the young man could not see the heart of Jesus; and he did not know the nature of Jesus, that He was the very Son of God. So he used the word

“good ” too lightly. And Jesus would not receive it in that way.

Then Jesus went on to speak of the commandments. Now the young man was simple, and well-meaning, and free from vice.

So he could say innocently, “Teacher, all these have I kept from my youth.”

He did not know all that is meant even by those old commandments of the Jews. Still, he had not been a thief and a murderer, and he had kept to the commandments in the ordinary way of a respectable, well-behaved young man’s life.

Jesus was pleased with his openness and eagerness, and when He looked into his earnest young face, He loved him. This was just the sort of man He delighted to have for a disciple. So He called him to follow Him, as He had called the fishermen from their nets a long while before.

But it was harder for this young man to obey than it had been for them. They were poor, hard-working toilers of the sea ; and they had not much to leave behind them. But this was a very rich young man.

Jesus must have found it painful to say the words that would search him out to the bottom of his heart : “There is one thing you are wanting in. Go and sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven ; and come, follow me.”

What an answer to his question ! He had never expected this. When he heard the words of Jesus,

all the brightness went out of his face ; his countenance fell, and he went away full of sorrow.

Jesus was very sad, too, and as He looked round on His disciples He said, "How hard is it for those people who have riches to enter into the kingdom of God !"

They were amazed at His language. But He repeated the sorrowful truth in a stronger way. "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Still more astonished, they asked, "Who then can be saved ?"

Jesus looked round on them as He answered, "With men it is impossible, but not with God ; for all things are possible with God."

CHAPTER VIII

ZACCHÆUS AND BARTIMÆUS

JESUS had given the twelve warning several times that He would have to suffer and die. He saw that His enemies were growing more determined, and that His end was drawing near. But He would not try to escape it; to have done so would have been to have deserted His great task. He said once that it would not do for a prophet to perish out of Jerusalem. And, therefore, He set His face steadily to go up to Jerusalem.

On the way He came to the city of Jericho, down by the Jordan, a city famous for its trade in balsam — the “balm of Gilead” — a very busy place.

Now there was at Jericho a man named Zacchæus. He was one of the head tax-gatherers, and he had made himself rich in his office. This man wanted to see Jesus out of curiosity, because He was famous, and people talked a great deal about Him. But Zacchæus was very short, and, as he thought he would not be able to get near to Jesus because of the crowd, he was afraid he would miss the sight. So he climbed up into a sycamore tree by the wayside, and sat there among the great leaves ready for the time when Jesus would pass by.

When Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and called him by name.

“Zacchæus,” He said, “make haste, and come down; for to-day I must stay at your house.”

Zacchæus was astonished and delighted. He hurried down from the tree, and took Jesus home with him.

When the people saw it, they found fault, saying, “He has gone to stay with a man that is a sinner.”

But Zacchæus stood up and said to Jesus, “Lord, half of my goods I will give to the poor; and if I have cheated a person out of anything, I will pay him back four times over.”

And Jesus said to him, “To-day is salvation come to this house; since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Either when He was going into Jericho, or when He was going out after staying at the house of Zacchæus and passing through the city—and we cannot say which, because two of the Gospel accounts say it was one way, and one that it was the other—as Jesus was going along the road with His disciples and a great number of other people, a blind man named Bartimæus was sitting by the wayside begging, as blind men in the East are often to be found sitting begging in the present day.

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was coming along, he began to cry out, “Jesus, thou son of David, have pity on me.”

This title, "Son of David," was very startling, for it meant the Messiah, the expected King of the Jews. Ever since Peter's confession at the foot of Hermon, a few of the disciples of Jesus had known that He was the Messiah, and no doubt a great many more were now coming to suspect it. But He had always told His friends to keep this quiet. Now here was a beggar shouting it out, and that, too, just when Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, the most dangerous of all places. The disciples were alarmed, and they tried to hush the man. But the more they scolded him the louder he shouted, and still the same title — "Thou Son of David."

The poor fellow's blundering eagerness did not displease Jesus. He was quite brave, and not at all afraid for Himself, and He knew that now at the very end of His life there could be no harm in it being known who He was. So He stood still and said, "Call him."

And they called to the blind man, saying, "Take heart, get up, He is calling you."

At that he flung away his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.

"What do you want Me to do to you?" said Jesus.

"Rabboni" (Honoured Teacher), he answered, "I want to have my sight again."

"Go," said Jesus; "your faith has saved you."

And immediately he got his sight again; and he followed Jesus.

IV

THE LAST WEEK

CHAPTER I

THE TWO SISTERS

WHEN the Jews from the country places went up to Jerusalem for the great feasts, as there were so many of them that they could not all stay in the city, some would lodge in the villages round about. One of these villages was Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, a little on the further side of the Mount of Olives. Here Jesus used to stay with His disciples, at the house of a well-to-do lady named Martha.

Martha had a sister named Mary; and it happened once, at an earlier time when He was visiting them, that Mary sat at His feet listening to His teaching, while Martha was busy and flustered in making great preparations for the meal. So she came to Jesus, saying, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me."

But Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. A few things, or even one, would be enough. For Mary

has chosen the good part which shall not be taken away from her."

Martha did not understand Jesus. He did not want the sisters to be put about in making grand preparations with a number of courses at dinner to please Him. He did not care for such things at all. A few things on the table, or even only one simple dish, would quite satisfy Him. He would much rather the sisters took their work quietly, and had time for talk with Him about what He really cared for, the Kingdom of Heaven. That was what Mary had chosen.

During His last visit to Jerusalem, while Jesus was again staying in Bethany, it happened that He was sitting at table in the house of Simon the leper — perhaps Simon was Martha's husband — when a woman came with a flask of very costly sweet-scented ointment, and broke the flask, and poured the ointment over His head.

Some of the people present there were vexed and angry at this, and they said to themselves, "What is the use of this waste of the ointment? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred shillings, and given to the poor."

But Jesus said, "Let her alone. She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burying of it." Then he promised that wherever the Gospel was preached throughout the whole world, what this woman had done should be spoken of in memory of her.

In the Gospel of John we read that the woman who made this gift of love to Jesus was Martha's sister Mary, and that the complaint about the waste was made by Judas.

It was just after this that Judas, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests and offered to give Jesus up to them, asking what they would pay him for doing so. They were delighted, and they gave him thirty pieces of silver, like thirty of our half-dollars, only worth more, just the price of a slave. Judas agreed to sell his Master for the price of a slave! He loved money, and he was vexed with Jesus for not being the sort of Christ he expected, a great conquering king. So the wicked man made his bargain, and from this time he looked about for a chance of giving Jesus up to His enemies.

CHAPTER II

PALM SUNDAY

JESUS had no longer any need to keep secret the truth that He was the Christ. By this time He had too many enemies for His friends to think of making Him a leader to fight against the Romans. Now, at last, He was ready to let them honour Him in a simple rustic way as their King.

He told two of His disciples to go to a village near Bethany. There they would find an ass's colt tied up. If anybody questioned them, they were to say, "The Lord has need of him." They found the colt tied at a door by a street-corner, and, as they began to loose him, some of the people standing by asked them what they were about, so they answered as Jesus had told them, and the people let them go.

They brought the colt to Jesus. Then they put some of their cloaks on it, and Jesus sat on it.

As He went, some of the people spread their cloaks on the road for Him to ride over, and others tore down leafy boughs from trees in the fields by the wayside and spread them over the road. They were very excited. Most of them were pilgrims from Galilee who had come up to the feast of the Passover. They had lost sight of Him for many

months, while He was living quietly in out-of-the-way places, till He had fallen in with the troupes of travellers on the high-road to Jerusalem. Even those who had left Him because of His hard sayings were glad, indeed, to have Him with them once more, especially as He let them honour Him in a simple country way as a king. He had never allowed anything of the kind in the old days, and no doubt that had been one reason why they had grown tired of Him.

Those who went first, and those who followed after — both parts of this procession of villagers — shouted “Hosanna” — a word which means almost the same as “God save the king.”

Some of the Pharisees were vexed, and they said to Him, “Teacher, scold your disciples.”

But Jesus answered, “I tell you if these people are still, the very stones will cry out.”

So they went up the slope of the Mount of Olives from the further side. There is a point at which the road turns the corner of a rock. Just as you get round the corner the whole city suddenly comes into view. When Jesus reached this spot and all the city lay spread out before Him in a moment, He burst into tears. He was going to die there. But it was no thought of Himself that troubled Him. He was thinking how the people had rejected Him, and how their ruin was coming on them, and He wept for Jerusalem, saying, “Oh, that thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things that belong

to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

And then He seemed to see the terrible spectacle of the siege of the city by its enemies—the armies camped round it, and its fall, till not one stone was left on another.

So His triumph was full of sorrow, not because He was riding to His death, though this was the case, but because His heart was breaking for the sin and ruin of His people.

CHAPTER III

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

WHEN Jesus had come into Jerusalem riding on the ass's colt with His friends about Him shouting their Hosannas, He first went to the Temple, and looked round on all that was to be seen there. The sight grieved and angered Him. But He did not say anything at the time, and when it was evening He went back to Bethany. The next day He went up to the Temple again, and then He did a daring thing.

Every Jew was expected to give a small amount of money for the expenses of the Temple, and this had to be paid in Jewish coins. So Jews who came from foreign countries had to change their money. Jesus found the money-changers at their business in the Temple itself. He also saw men there selling doves for sacrifices. The high priest used to keep the doves at the Mount of Olives, and he made a good profit out of this sale. He would be very angry if anybody interfered with it.

Most likely these things were being done in the outer court of the Temple; this was called "The Court of the *Gentiles*"—the people who were not Jews. The noise of the traffic would sadly distract these people at their prayers. The Jews did not

care for that ; they despised the Gentiles, and they had their own more quiet part farther in the Temple. But Jesus was angry at the sight. He drove out the people who were buying and selling in the Temple, upset the tables of the money-changers, sending their money rolling over the pavement, turned over the seats of the dove-sellers, and sent back the men who were walking through the Temple, carrying their tools and their parcels as though it were a common street of the city or a mere market-place.

“Is it not written,” He said, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but you have made it a den of robbers.”

This enraged the chief priests, and they would have liked to have killed Him on the spot. But they were afraid of the people, who admired His teaching, and who had no love for the proud, aristocratic priests.

Still, when they saw Him again, they asked Him what right He had to do these things. It was a very natural question. But as He knew they were only on the lookout for a chance to catch Him, He said He would give them His answer if they would first answer a question He would put to them — “The baptism of John — was it from heaven or from men?”

This was a clever question. They did not know what to answer. If they said from heaven, Jesus would ask, “Why, then, did you not believe him?” Yet they dared not say from men, for fear of the

people ; because all the people held John to be a prophet.

So they said, " We do not know."

And Jesus said, " Neither do I tell you by what right I do these things."

Another time when He was up at the Temple, He sat down in the outer court near a great chest, which had thirteen trumpet-shaped openings for the people to drop their offerings into. A number of rich people came along, and managed to let it be seen that they were putting in a good deal of money. Then came a poor widow ; and she only put in two mites, which make up a farthing.

When He saw it Jesus called His disciples, and said to them, " I tell you truly this poor widow put in more than all the rest ; for they gave out of their abundance ; but she gave out of her want, all she had, all her living."

CHAPTER IV

THE LORD'S SUPPER

JESUS and His disciples had come up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of the Passover. When the time came they asked Him, "Where do you wish us to go and make ready for you to eat the Passover?"

He sent off two of His disciples for this work, saying to them, "Go into the city till you meet a man carrying a pitcher of water" — a very unusual thing, for it is always the women who carry water in the East — "follow him, and wherever he enters say, 'The Teacher says, Where is My dining-room, where I am to eat the Passover with My disciples?'"

This had to be done secretly, because the enemies of Jesus had spies about on the watch to catch Him, and He very much wanted to be able to take this last supper with His disciples before His death, which He knew must be quite near now.

The two disciples set off and found the man with the pitcher. They followed him, and said what Jesus had told them, and the man of the house let them in. Inside they saw the cushions spread out on the seats all ready for the feast. Then they went and got the lamb and the herbs and fruit and bread that were wanted for the proper kind of meal eaten on Passover night.

In the evening Jesus came with the twelve, and they sat down to eat the lamb. Next came a dish called *Charosheth*, a mixture of figs, dates, and almonds, with vinegar. Between each course a cup of light wine mixed with water went round. While they were eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I tell you, one of you shall betray Me; yes, one that is eating with Me."

This greatly distressed them, and they said to Him, one by one, "Is it I?"

"It is one of the twelve," said Jesus. "It is he who is dipping with Me in the dish."

Now at the Passover it was usual for each person to take a bunch of bitter herbs and dip it into the common dish of the fruit and eat it. Just when Jesus was dipping into this dish, Judas dipped too. So Judas was pointed out as the traitor.

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread. It had been made without yeast to raise it, so that it was hard and flat like a biscuit. When He had given thanks He broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you."

After supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks for that too, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it. This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you do it, in remembrance of Me."

This was the beginning of what we call the Lord's Supper. It is a feast which Jesus Christ Himself gave to His people. It comes down to us from Him. Every time it is truly taken now, Jesus is there, giving it to His people, and offering His love and His saving power.

CHAPTER V

IN THE GARDEN

AT the Passover it was usual to sing six psalms—from the 113th to the 118th. Two were sung during the feast; the others at the close. When Jesus had sung these last psalms with His disciples, He left the house with them, and took them through the dark, narrow streets to the gate on the eastern side of the city. They went out of this gate, and down the stony road to the ravine of the Kidron. When they had crossed, they found themselves on the slope of the Mount of Olives.

Here was a place called Gethsemane. The word means an olive-press. Perhaps men used to squeeze the oil out of the olives that grew on the side of the hill at this place. Jesus often came here at night, because it was a quiet place for thinking and praying, and yet not far from the city, and near the road back to Bethany.

On the way Jesus became very sad, and He told His disciples that they were all going to leave Him. They would not hear of it; and Peter said, "Though all the others may, I will not."

"Truly, I tell you," said Jesus, "that to-day, even to-night, before the cock crows twice you will deny Me thrice."

But Peter was quite passionate in declaring he would not do such a thing.

"If I must die with you," he said, "I will not deny you." So they all said.

When they had reached Gethsemane, He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

Then He took with Him Peter, and James, and John. As they were going on a little further, He became quite amazed and distressed; and He said to His three friends, "My soul is most sorrowful, even to death; stay here and watch." Then He went forward a little, and as He went He fell down more than once. He was so faint, and weary, and sick at heart. And He prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from Him, and said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible with Thee; take this cup away from Me. Still, not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

When He came back to His three friends, He found them asleep.

"Simon," He said, sadly, "could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation."

Then He went away again, and prayed in the same words. Three times he did so. He was in a great agony. The sweat came from Him like drops of blood. The last time He came back and found them sleeping again, He said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest."

But the next moment there was a flash of torches

and the sound of many people. It was the coming of Judas and the soldiers.

“Up!” said Jesus, “we must be going. See! he who is going to betray Me is at hand.”

While He was speaking Judas came up, and with him a number of men armed with swords and clubs.

Judas went straight to Jesus, and kissed Him with a great show of love. It was his sign to the soldiers, that they might know which was Jesus. Then they seized Him, and His disciples all left Him and ran for their lives.

CHAPTER VI

THE JEWISH TRIAL

JESUS was now a prisoner in charge of the Temple guard. They led Him back to the city, and took Him to the house of the high priest, Caiaphas, who was the chief authority among the Jews. Although it was the middle of the night, the high priest was up waiting for Jesus, and he had some of the principal Jews with him. They were seated in a semi-circle on cushions spread round the floor, turbans on their heads, with Caiaphas in the middle. When Jesus was brought in, they made Him stand before them, though it was usual to allow prisoners to sit.

Several witnesses had been got together by these very Jews who were to be the judges of Jesus. That was most unfair. The witnesses came and swore false things about Jesus, and nobody could believe them. Some came and swore that Jesus had threatened to pull down the Temple and build it again in three days. But they contradicted one another.

Then Caiaphas sprang up in a rage, and stood face to face with Jesus, glaring at Him. All the witnesses had broken down. The only thing was to force the prisoner to say something that would

make Him condemn Himself. Caiaphas commanded Him to say on oath whether He was the Christ.

Jesus answered, "I am; and you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

At this the high priest tore his clothes, as a sign that he was shocked to hear Jesus using such dreadful words. "What further need have we of witnesses?" he cried. "You have heard the blasphemy; what do you think?" They said He was worthy of death. And some of these great gentlemen of Jerusalem spat on Him, and cuffed Him, and jeered at Him.

While this was going on Peter, who had followed Jesus at a distance, was standing by a fire in the outer court, warming himself, for it is very cold at night in the spring up in Jerusalem among the mountains. One of the maid-servants of the high priest, passing by, looked at him, and said, "You were with the Nazarene — Jesus?"

Peter denied. He said he did not know what she meant. Then he went out to the porch; and a cock crew. The maid would not give in. She began gossiping with the idlers standing about, saying, "This is one of them." Peter denied it a second time. Now he was being watched, and he knew it. This frightened him very much. When some of them came and said, "Certainly you are one of them; you are a Galilean" — they knew him

by his speech — Peter began to curse and swear, saying, “I do not know this man of whom you are speaking.” Then the cock crew again. At that moment the soldiers were leading Jesus away after His trial. As He passed He gave Peter one look. It was enough. Peter remembered what Jesus had said about the cock crowing, and he rushed out and burst into an agony of tears. It had all come true! He had denied his Lord!

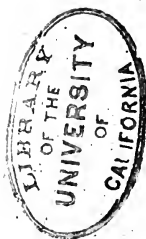
CHAPTER VII

THE ROMAN TRIAL

VERY early in the morning a meeting of the whole Jewish council was got together, and this meeting ordered Jesus to be taken to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, because the Jews were so much under the Romans that they had no right to put anybody to death. Pilate questioned Jesus whether he was the King of the Jews, and Jesus said He was. But when the chief priests brought a number of things against Him He would not answer a word. Pilate wondered at this; but he did not find that Jesus was guilty of any crime. He did not know what to do. But as Jesus had come from Galilee he sent him to Herod, the ruler of that part of the country, who happened to be staying in Jerusalem at the time. Herod was delighted. He thought this was a compliment to him; and he had long wanted to see Jesus work a miracle. But Jesus would do nothing of the kind for a show to amuse this bad king, the murderer of John the Baptist. And when Herod questioned Him He was silent. Then Herod began to mock Him, putting one of his white cloaks on Him, as though He were a king, for Jewish kings wore white robes.



THE SPINA CHRISTI



Dressed up in this style, He was sent back to Pilate.

At the feast Pilate used to let off one prisoner, whoever it might be the Jews asked for. Now there was a brigand named Barabbas lying bound in the dungeon. Pilate said, "Would you like me to let off the King of the Jews?"

They shouted back, "Not this man, but Barabbas!"

"What then shall I do to Him whom you call the King of the Jews?"

"Crucify Him!"

"Why? What crime has He committed?"

"Crucify Him — crucify Him!" That was all the answer he could get from them. And they shouted it again and again, louder and louder. The mob took up the cry and shouted it through the streets — "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate was frightened. He would like to have let off Jesus, for he could see quite clearly that there was nothing against Him. But he was afraid of the Jews.

First he gave Jesus up to be scourged. That was a most cruel torture. The whip was loaded with lead or bones to bruise and tear the flesh of the victim, who was stripped to the waist and bound to a post while the soldiers lashed Him on the back, and even on the head and face. Sometimes it would kill a man on the spot. After this fearful torture the soldiers made sport with their prisoner. They flung a soldier's red cloak on Him,

or perhaps it was one of Pilate's old cast-off garments; they gathered some of the thorn twigs that grow on bushes just outside the walls of Jerusalem, and twisted them into a mock garland for His head; and they put a reed in His hands, striking Him on the head with it first, and spitting on Him. Then they came before Him pretending that He was a king, and bowing to Him and mocking Him. Jesus took it all in silence. When the soldiers were tired of their sport, they took off the purple cloak and put on Him His own clothes. It is almost too dreadful to write about these things. Yet it is good to know that Jesus never broke down under the cruel pain, nor lost His temper at the insults and mockery. He bore all with perfect patience and calmness. It was the cup His Father gave Him to drink.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CRUCIFIXION

THE Jews' way of killing criminals was by stoning; the Roman way for their own people was beheading with the sword. But slaves and conquered people were sometimes killed with the dreadful death called crucifixion. Pilate ordered Jesus to be punished with the slave's death.

It was about nine o'clock in the morning when they led Jesus out to be crucified. This was to be done outside the city, at a place called "The skull." They put the cross on His back for Him to carry. But after His agony in the garden and the weary trials, the cruel scourging and the mockery, Jesus was not able to bear it all the way; and as they met a man named Simon, of Cyrene, North Africa, coming in from his work in the field, they made him carry the cross.

They fastened Jesus to the cross with nails through His hands and His feet. There was a wooden peg for Him to sit on when the cross was raised up. Over His head they put up this title which Pilate had ordered—"The King of the Jews."

The nailing and lifting must have been terrible to bear. But all Jesus said was, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

The soldiers sat down by the cross to watch. While they were there they took out their dice and threw them to divide the clothes of Jesus among them. The people who went by along the road mocked at Him. So did the chief priests, saying, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

There were two robbers crucified with Jesus; one on His right hand, and one on His left. Even these poor fellow-sufferers mocked Him. But later on one of them said to Him, "Remember me when You come in Your kingdom." And Jesus answered, "To-day you shall be with Me in Paradise."

In the middle of the day a great darkness came over the city, lasting for three hours, till about three o'clock in the afternoon. At that time Jesus cried out, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" which means, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Some of the people thought He was calling for Elijah. Then somebody got a sponge, and, filling it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and held it up to His lips. They tried to stop the man, but he cried, "Let me do it: let us see if Elijah will come to Him." It was the one little act of kindness that was shown to Him on the cross. The end was very near now. Soon after this Jesus was heard praying, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit." Then He cried out very loudly, and His head fell forward on His breast. Jesus was dead.



JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA'S TOMB



When they took Him down from the cross, a man named Joseph of Arimathæa, one of the principal Jews, went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. Pilate let him have it, and Joseph had it laid in a new tomb, and a great stone rolled in front. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee had watched all these terrible things from a distance, and now they noticed the tomb where His body was laid.

V

THE RISEN CHRIST

CHAPTER I

THE EMPTY TOMB

JESUS had been crucified on a Friday, and buried in the afternoon of the same day. His friends did not like to do anything on the next day, because that was the Jews' Sabbath. But very early on Sunday morning, before it was quite light, three or four women set out for the tomb where the body of Jesus had been laid. They were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, the mother of John and the other James, and perhaps some others. On their way they were wondering who would roll away the stone for them, for it was very heavy. But when they reached the tomb they found that the stone had been rolled away. The grave, which was a cave in the hillside, was open. They went in, and were startled to see some one there — a young man, he seemed to be, dressed in a white robe, and sitting on the ground at the right-hand side of the tomb. He saw how scared they were, and he said to them, "Do not be frightened.

You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who has been crucified. He has been raised up. He is not here. Look at the place where they laid Him. And go quickly, and tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you into Galilee. There you will see Him, as He told you."

When they came out of the tomb, they were trembling with excitement and greatly astonished — full of fear, and yet full of joy, too. They really did not know what to make of it; and they hurried back to the city to tell the other disciples what they had seen and heard. But the tale they told seemed to the disciples mere idle talk. They could not get them to believe it.

If this had been all, it might have been thought an idle tale; but a greater wonder happened soon after. Jesus was seen again several times. He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve, then to five hundred of His followers at once. Then He appeared to James, then to all the Apostles, and last of all, much later, to Paul. All these six appearances of Jesus after His death were known to Paul. They are quite enough to show that it is not an idle tale to say that Jesus rose from the dead. So we may be sure that He was seen alive again after death several times, by a number of His disciples. And we to-day do not worship a dead Christ. He never died again. He is living now as truly as when He appeared to His friends.

The coming again of Jesus to them quite changed

His disciples. When they saw Him seized by His enemies, tortured, insulted, crucified, killed, buried, it seemed as though this were the end of all their hopes. They only met to weep and mourn in misery and despair. But after they had seen Him again, they were like new men, full of joy and hope and courage. It was the rising of Jesus from the dead that made such a change in them; and it is because He rose from the dead and is living to-day, that we have reason to trust Him, and live in the joy of His unseen presence.

CHAPTER II

EMMAUS

WE read of other appearances of Jesus after He had risen from the dead, besides the six that were known to Paul. One of the most beautiful stories is that which tells of the walk to Emmaus.

On Easter Day, the very day on which Jesus had been raised up from the dead, two of His disciples were walking together from Jerusalem to a little village out in the country, named Emmaus. As they went they talked over the dreadful things that had happened on the last Friday. While they were talking Jesus drew near, and walked with them, but they did not know it was Jesus. He asked them what they were talking about. They hardly liked to tell a stranger, and they stood still, looking sad, till one of them, whose name was Cleopas, said, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem, and yet do not you know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?"

"The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people — how the chief priests and our rulers gave Him up to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was to redeem Israel."

They told Him that it was the third day since these things had happened, and they went on to describe how some women of their company had said they had found the tomb empty, and had seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. They told Him, too, that some of them had gone to the tomb and found it, as the women said, empty ; but they had not seen Jesus.

“O foolish men,” said Jesus, “how slow you are to believe what the prophets have said.” And He went on to show them from the prophets how these things must be.

When they came to the village where they were going, He walked on as though He wanted to go further. But they made Him stay, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”

So He went in to stay with them. When they sat down to supper, He took a loaf and gave thanks, and broke it just in His old way. Then they saw it was Jesus. The next moment He vanished out of their sight. And they said to one another, “Was not our heart burning within us while He was talking with us on the way ? ”

Then they got up at once and hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples. But when they met the eleven apostles they found that they too knew that Jesus had been raised up from the dead, for the first thing they said was, “The Lord has been raised up indeed ! and He has appeared to

Simon !” Here was wonderful news each had to tell. They talked it over eagerly. While they were doing so, Jesus himself appeared in their midst. They were terrified, dreadfully frightened ; for they thought they had seen a ghost. But Jesus showed them His hands and His feet, and made them quite sure that it really was Himself, their dear Lord and Friend come back from the dead. After this He appeared to His people again and again, sometimes at Jerusalem, sometimes in Galilee ; till, one day He led them out to the Mount of Olives, towards Bethany, and lifted up His hands and blessed them. And while He was blessing them He was carried up into heaven, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.

VI

SOME STORIES FROM JOHN

CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF THE EARLY DISCIPLES

ALL that I have told you so far about Jesus Christ is taken from the first three Gospels — Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We take what they say together because they go over much the same story. These Gospels were written earlier than the Gospel of John. There are many more things in them than there has been room to set down in this book. And a great many things happened in the life of Jesus that are not even to be found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

John the apostle spent the last years of his life at Ephesus in Asia Minor. At a time of cruel persecution he was sent to the island of Patmos, and there, perhaps, he wrote that strange book called "The Revelation," which is placed at the end of our Bible, and which tells of the war between good and evil, and the great victory of Christ at last. Years after this, when he was a very old man, and most of the other people who had seen Jesus had died, John put

together his memories of those wonderful days of his youth when he used to go about with Jesus as one of His disciples. These memories stood out in his memory sharp and clear, as the scenes of youth do stand out even in old age. But John had thought much about them and often talked of them, and when he came to set them down in a book he did it in his own way.

John commences by telling how the Word was in the beginning face to face with God and was God ; how all things were made by Him, how He was the light of men, and how He became a man and lived among men. So by the "Word" he meant that which is God in Jesus, what we call the Divine nature of Jesus.

Then John goes on to tell us about John the Baptist and the early disciples of Jesus. It was in the time before Jesus had begun His public work, but after He had been baptized. John was standing with two of his disciples when he saw Jesus coming along. The Baptist gazed at Him with awe and admiration, and exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God !" At another time he said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Then the two disciples went after Jesus. Seeing them following, He turned and asked them what they wanted.

"Rabbi," they said, "where are you staying?"

"Come," He answered, "and you shall see." So they went home with Him. This was about four

o'clock in the afternoon. One of these two was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He went and fetched his brother Peter.

The next day Jesus found Philip and called him; Philip was from Bethsaida, where Andrew and Peter lived, so most likely they were friends. Philip fetched his friend Nathaniel. But Nathaniel was slow to believe what Philip said about Jesus; "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he asked. Philip made a very wise answer—"Come and see."

When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to Him He said, "See an Israelite indeed in whom there is no deceit."

"How do you know me?" said Nathaniel.

"Before Philip called you. When you were under the fig tree I saw you."

That was enough. Nathaniel's doubts vanished. With joy he cried, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel."

Then John goes on to tell how Jesus came to work His first wonder. He was at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee with His disciples. They ran short of wine, and His mother came to Him about it. Jesus told the servants to fill some water-pots with water. Then He said, "Draw out now and give to the steward." When they poured it out they found it was wine.

It is John, too, who gives us the story of Nicodemus. This man was a Jew of very high rank,

and he came to Jesus by night because he did not want to be seen.

"Rabbi," he said, "we know you are a teacher sent from God, for no man can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him."

Jesus answered in a very different way from what Nicodemus was expecting —

"Most certainly, I tell you, unless a man is born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

"How can a man be born when he is old?"

"Most certainly, I tell you, unless a man is born by water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Do not be surprised that I told you you must be born from above. The wind blows as it will. You hear its voice. But you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So is every one that is born by the Spirit."

CHAPTER II

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

IT happened once when Jesus was passing through Samaria, that He came to a small town called Sychar, at the entrance to the valley between two mountains, called Ebal and Gerizim. A little way from the town there was a well; this well is to be seen in the present day, for it is still there.

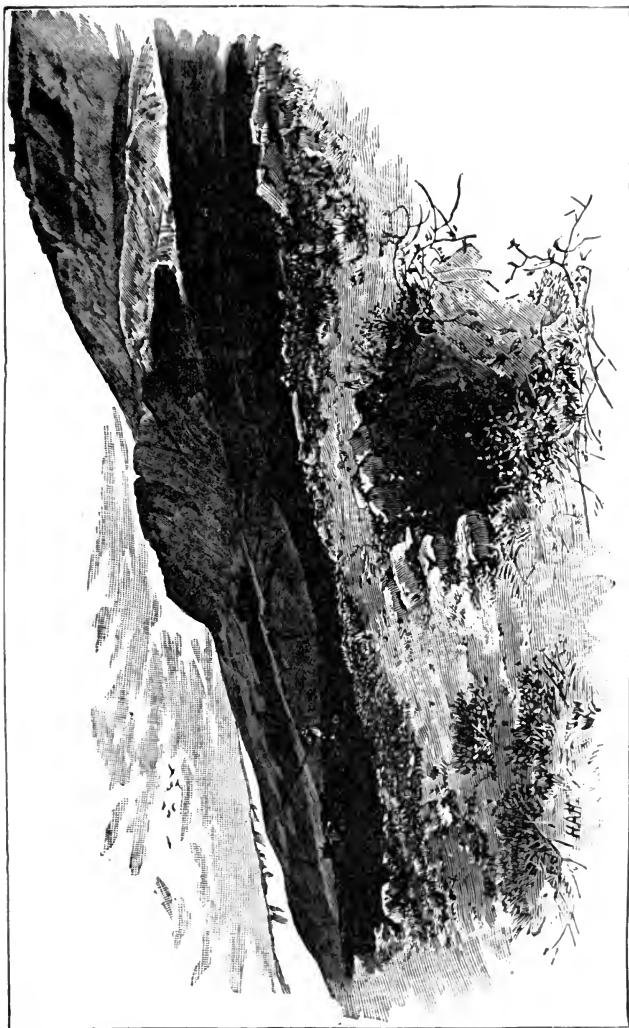
When Jesus reached the well it was twelve o'clock in the day, a very hot time in Palestine. As He was tired and thirsty, He sat down by the well while His disciples went into the town to buy some food. But He could not get any water to drink, because He had no means of fetching it up from the deep well.

Presently a woman of Samaria came down to draw water. Jesus asked her to give Him some to drink.

She was very much surprised at this, because Jews did not like to take favours from Samaritans, as they despised them.

"How is it," she said, "that you, a Jew, ask for drink from me, a Samaritan woman?"

Jesus did not answer her question, but instead of doing so, He surprised her still more by saying, "If only you knew God's gift, and who it is that



JACOB'S WELL



asks you, you would ask Him, and He would give you living water."

"Sir," she answered, "you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. How then will you get your living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?"

"Every one who drinks of this water," said Jesus, "shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, for the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

"Sir," she answered, "give me this water that I may not thirst, nor come all the way here to draw from the well."

"Go, call your husband."

"I have no husband," she answered.

"You said rightly that you have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband."

How startled she must have been to find a stranger who knew the miserable story of her life!

"Sir," she said, "I see you are a prophet!" Then she thought she would get this strange prophet to answer a question that had often puzzled her. So she said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain" — pointing to Mount Gerizim, the mountain on the south side of the valley, where the Samaritans had built a temple, and where they have sacrificed their Paschal lamb, even till our own time — "but you

say that the place where men ought to worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," said Jesus, "believe Me, the time has come to worship the Father neither in this mountain nor at Jerusalem. God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

This very much puzzled her, and all she could answer was, "I know that Messiah is coming ; when He is come He will tell us all things."

"I, who am speaking to you," said Jesus, "am He."

Then the woman left her water-pot, and ran back to the town, saying, "Come, see a man who told me all that ever I did ; can this be the Christ ?"

In this way she brought a number of her neighbours out to the well ; and Jesus preached to them, and won some of them to believe in Him.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN WHO WAS BORN BLIND

WHEN Jesus was up at Jerusalem for one of the feasts He passed a man who had been blind from his birth.

“Rabbi,” said His disciples, “who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

The Jews were taught to believe that suffering was the punishment of sin : so, if a man was born with something wrong about him, it was hard to see when the sin had been committed. Had he lived in another life before he was born to the present life ? or was he suffering for his parents’ sins ?

Jesus said it was neither. The man was there as he was that the works of God might be done. Then He spat in the dust and made clay, and put it to the man’s eyes, saying, “Go and wash in the pool of Siloam.” He went and washed, and when he came back he could see.

Now he was a well-known beggar, and some of those people who had often seen him said, “Is not this the man who used to sit and beg ?”

Some said, “It is he”; others said, “No, but he is like him.” The man himself put them right by saying, “I am he.”

“How, then, were your eyes opened?” they asked.

He told them what Jesus had done, and they took him to the Pharisees, who were much put about because the cure had taken place on the Sabbath day. So they questioned the man very closely; next they sent for his parents, who said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that he sees now, or who opened his eyes. He is of age; ask him.”

Then the Pharisees called him up again, and said, “Give God the glory; we know that this man is a sinner.”

He answered, “Whether he be a sinner I do not know; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.”

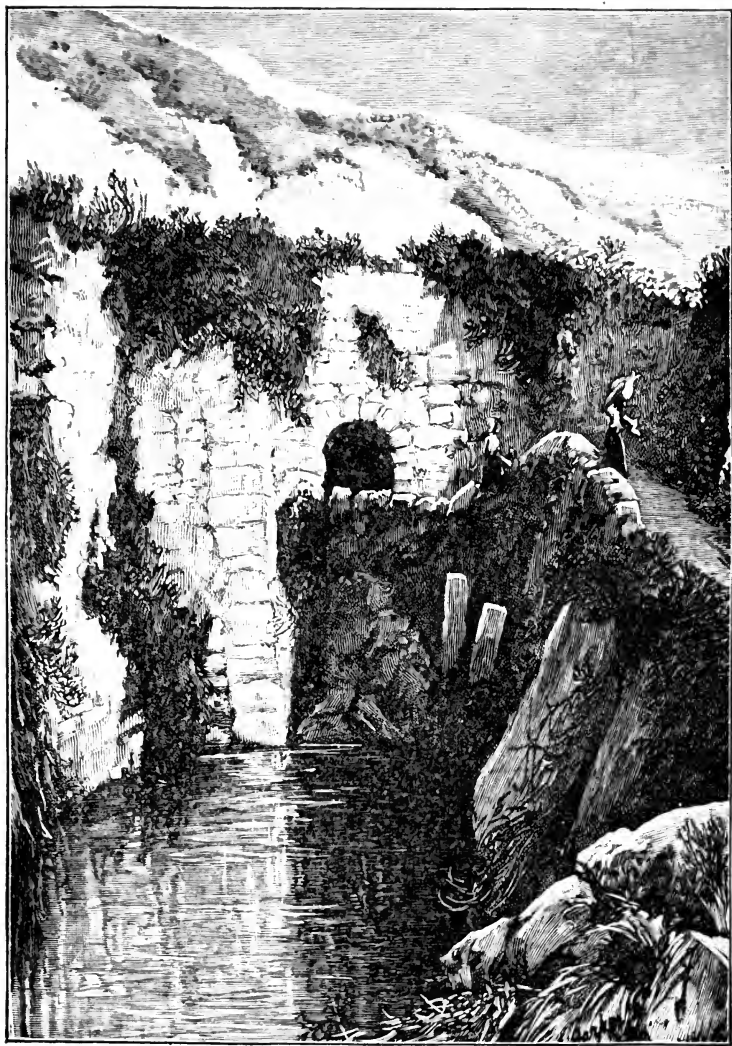
“What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?”

“I told you before; but you would not hear me. Will you hear me now? Do you wish to become His disciples?”

They could make nothing of him, and they were in a great rage.

But he was a brave man, and he would not be quieted. “Why,” he went on, “here is a marvel; you do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes. If this Man had not come from God He could do nothing.”

At this they lost their temper, and answered, “You were altogether born in sin, and do you teach us?” And they turned him out.



THE POOL OF SILOAM



Jesus heard they had turned him out, and when He met him He asked him if he believed on the Son of God. The man did not understand at first, but when Jesus had explained to him he cried, "Lord, I believe," and bowed down on the ground before Jesus.

CHAPTER IV

LAZARUS

NOT many weeks before Jesus was given up to His enemies, and while He was living in quiet with His disciples in the part called Perea, down in the south on the further side of the River Jordan, Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha of Bethany, was taken dangerously ill. The sisters sent word to Jesus, with the message, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Jesus loved the family at Bethany, and yet He stayed where He was for two days after He had received this message. For He had work to do that must not be given up, though what it was we do not know.

At the end of two days He said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going to wake Him from sleep." The disciples knew that it was very dangerous for Jesus to go near Jerusalem at that time, but one of them named Thomas said, "Let us go, too, that we may die with Him."

When Jesus came to Bethany He found that Lazarus had already been in the grave four days. As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him; Mary did not yet know He was so near. The two sisters had been dreadfully disappointed that Jesus had not come before. Now,

it seemed, He was too late. It was very trying for them. Jesus was never flustered and in a hurry, as Martha often was ; but then He was never really too late. Still Martha could not understand that at the time, and directly she saw Jesus she burst out with the complaint, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."

"Your brother shall rise again," said Jesus.

"Yes ; I know he shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day." She did not find much comfort in that thought. It was a far-off thought, something she always believed because she had been taught it from a child ; but it did not mean much to her. She did not see that it had anything to do with Jesus. So He said to her, "I am the Resurrection and the Life ; he who trusts in Me, though he die, he shall yet live ; and whoever lives trusting in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Then it was as though a sunbeam broke out of the clouds, and she looked up through her tears and said, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God."

After this she went back and called her sister, secretly, whispering to her, "The Teacher is here, and He is asking for you."

Mary got up quickly and went out to Him and flung herself on the ground at His feet, repeating the very same words that Martha had used, "Lord, if only you had been here my brother would not have died."

They must often have been saying this to one another.

When Jesus saw her crying He was dreadfully distressed. "Where have you laid him?" He asked. And as they led Him towards the tomb He wept. When the Jews saw this they said, "See how He loved him!" Jesus, sighing and groaning, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

"Take away the stone," He said. Martha did not like them to have that done, because Lazarus had been buried four days; so Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

Then they rolled away the stone. When Jesus had lifted up His eyes and given thanks to His Father for having heard His prayer, He called with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"

And the dead man came out of the cave alive again, bound up in white linen from head to foot, with his face wrapped in a napkin.

"Loose him," said Jesus, "and let him go."

So Lazarus was brought back from the dead; and he went home with his sisters, to their great joy and wonder.

But the enemies of Jesus made this a reason for seeking to destroy Lazarus, as well as Jesus.

CHAPTER V

SOME MEMORIES OF THE TRIAL AND DEATH OF JESUS

JOHN gives us a very full account of the last days of Jesus on earth. He knew some of the high priest's people, and he was allowed to go in with Jesus to the trial at the high priest's house, and watch what went on. He tells us, too, about the trial before Pontius Pilate—how Pilate questioned Jesus, and how Jesus perplexed him with strange answers. We learn that when the soldiers had been mocking Jesus, Pilate brought Him out to the Jews, with the purple cloak and the crown of thorns on His head, and said, "Behold the Man."

John tells us that when Jesus was on the cross He saw His mother and "the disciple whom He loved"—that must be meant for John himself—standing by. Looking at His mother, He said, "Woman, see your son," and then looking to John, He said, "See your mother." They both understood that the dying Jesus was trusting Mary to the care of His friend, and from that time John took her to his own home.

After this, we learn, Jesus said, "I thirst," and then it was that somebody gave Him the sour wine

on a sponge. Directly He had received it He said, "It is finished," and His Spirit passed away.

We learn, too, from John, that the soldiers broke the legs of the two robbers, to kill them before the Sabbath. They did not do so to Jesus, because He was dead already. It was very unusual for a person to die so quickly on the cross. The sufferers sometimes lingered in agony for several days. To make sure that Jesus was dead, a soldier pierced His side, and there came out blood and water.

One more recollection of this dreadful day. John tells us that Nicodemus brought some spices to the burial of Jesus in Joseph's tomb, which was in a garden. This shows that he had secretly believed in Jesus.

CHAPTER VI

MARY AT THE TOMB, AND THOMAS WHO DOUBTED

JOHN has his memories, too, of the risen Christ. It is he who tells us about Mary Magdalene at the tomb. She came with the other women very early on the Sunday morning on which Jesus had risen from the dead. But none of them knew of this glad wonder. When she found the tomb empty she ran and told Peter, and he came, and John with him; and they found the linen clothes lying rolled up in the empty tomb.

Mary was standing by, crying. She stooped down and looked in. There she saw two angels in white, sitting one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been. They asked her why she was crying, and she said, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

Then she turned and saw some one standing by her, and He said to her, "Woman, why are you crying? Whom are you looking for?"

She thought it was the gardener, and she answered, "Sir, if you have taken Him from here, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will come and bring Him away."

“Mary!” He said, for it was Jesus.

She turned with a start. “Rabboni! (Master!)” she cried, and she would have flung herself upon Him. But He drew back, saying, “Do not touch Me; for I am not yet ascended to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.”

That same evening, when the disciples were in a room with the door shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said, “Peace be with you,” and showed them His hands and His feet. They were glad indeed when they saw it really was their dear Lord come back to them from the grave. He breathed on them, giving them the Holy Spirit and the right to say what sort of people’s sins could be forgiven, and what sort of people’s sins were still to stand against them.¹

Now Thomas was not present, and when he heard of it he said, “Unless I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into them, and my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

A week later the disciples were met together, and this time Thomas was with them. Jesus came again and stood in the midst of them, though the doors were shut, and said, “Peace be with you.” Then, turning to Thomas, He added, “Reach out your finger and see My hands; and reach your hand and

¹ John was one of the Apostles to whom Jesus gave this right, and we may see how he used it in his own writings, as for example in 1 John i. 8-10.

put it into My side ; and be not without faith, but be believing."

Thomas cried, "My Lord and my God!"

"Because you have seen Me," said Jesus, "you have believed. Happy are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

CHAPTER VII

PETER BY THE SEA

THE last of John's recollections takes us away to the Sea of Galilee; he does not say when. Peter was there with some other of the disciples of Jesus.

"I am going fishing," he said.

The others agreed to go with him. But they took nothing all night.

As they came in at daybreak Jesus was standing on the beach; but they did not know it was He. Calling to them over the water, He said, "Children, have you anything to eat?"

"No," they answered.

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some fish."

They did so, and they were not able to draw the net to the shore for the great number of fishes that were in it.

The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" At this Peter girded his coat about him and leaped into the sea, wading through the water to the shore. The others came in the little boat, dragging the net full of fishes. There they saw a fire of charcoal, and a fish broiling on it; there was some bread, too. Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

So Peter went aboard and drew the net to land, and they found in it a hundred and fifty-three fishes.

“Come,” said Jesus, “and have your breakfast.” And none of the disciples dared to ask who He was; but they were sure now that it was the Lord.

After breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered. “You know that I love You dearly.”

“Feed My lambs,” said Jesus.

He asked him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered again. “You know that I love You dearly.”

“Care for My sheep.”

Once more He asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me dearly?”

Peter was grieved because He had asked him the question three times, and he said, “Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You dearly.”

“Feed my sheep,” said Jesus. Then He went on to tell Peter that, though he had girded himself when he was young, when he was old he would have to stretch out his hands, and another would gird him, and carry him where he did not wish to go. John wrote about this after Peter was dead; and by that time he was able to see what Jesus meant. It was a warning of the death Peter was to die, for Peter followed his Master faithfully to the last, and was martyred; it is said he was crucified.

VII

THE DISCIPLES AT JERUSALEM

CHAPTER I

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

It was the harvest festival, which the Jews called the feast of the Pentecost, a few weeks after the resurrection of Jesus. A hundred and twenty of the disciples of Jesus were in Jerusalem, and were met together in one room. Suddenly they heard a sound like a great rushing wind, then they saw what looked like tongues of fire, which settled on each of the hundred and twenty. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. A great excitement seized them, and they broke out into the praises of God with strange wild cries. Indeed, so strange were these cries that when the Jews heard the sound they said those people must be drunk. We never hear anything of the kind now, but the same thing happened at Corinth years later, and Paul had a great deal to say about it. He did not think it anything to be proud of, or boast about. Yet it was a sign that the hearts of the disciples were so greatly stirred by the Spirit of God that they could not restrain them-

selves ; they could not help bursting out into cries of joy.

But the gift of the Spirit was meant for something better than this. It was given to help the disciples preach the good news of Christ and His kingdom. They began at once to preach to the hosts of Jews, who had come up to the feast from all parts of the Roman Empire.

The people were amazed and perplexed. They could not make out what it all meant. Some said, "They are drunk with new wine."

Peter stood up with the rest of the Apostles, and declared that for all their excitement they were not drunk. It was not at all likely they would be, seeing it was only nine o'clock in the morning. He said this was the coming about of what the ancient prophet Joel had spoken of —

And it shall be in the last days, saith God,
I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh ;
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams.

Peter went on to tell how this coming of the Spirit of God — no longer only on prophets, but on all kinds of people, young and old — was brought about by Jesus Christ. He charged the Jews with crucifying Jesus ; but he declared that God had raised Him from the dead, and that he and his friends were witnesses of that great wonder.

When they heard this they were pricked to the heart, and cried, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter told them to turn from evil, and become baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Those who accepted what Peter said were baptized, and a host of new disciples was added to the number of the followers of Jesus.

CHAPTER II

THE HAPPY LIFE OF THE BROTHERS

THESE disciples of Jesus looked upon one another as brothers and sisters. Those who had property sold it and gave to those who were needy. Every day they used to meet in one another's houses and dine together in a happy simplicity of heart, full of kindness, full of joy, full of praise.

They used to go up to the Temple to pray, for they were still Jews. It happened once that when Peter and John were going into the Temple at three o'clock in the afternoon, one of the hours of prayer, there was a man who had been born lame lying at the gate called Beautiful. Perhaps this was the "Susa Gate," one made of massive Corinthian brass, so heavy that it is said it took twenty men to move it. So here were splendour of man's work and man's helpless misery side by side.

Seeing Peter and John, the lame man began to beg. Peter, fixing his eyes on him, said, "Look on us." The fishermen did not look as though they had much to give away. But the poor are kind to the poor, and seafaring people are often very free with their money. So the beggar still expected something.

But Peter said, "Silver and gold I have none; but what I have I will give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth—WALK!" At the same time he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately he got strength in his feet and ankle bones. He leaped up; he stood a moment. Then he began to walk, and he went with them into the Temple, walking and leaping and praising God.

The people were astonished, for they had often seen the lame man begging at the Temple gate; and they ran together in a great crowd. Then Peter preached to them about Jesus Christ, through whose power the wonder had been done. In this way a great many more disciples were added to them. But the priests and the principal people at the Temple were vexed at the preaching of Jesus, whom they had crucified. They had Peter arrested and brought before Caiaphas and the council—before the very people who were examining Jesus when Peter denied his Master. But Peter was another man now. A great change had come over him since Jesus had risen from the dead and he had received the Spirit of God. Besides, he had learnt well the lesson of his fall. So when the council told him and John to speak no more in the name of Jesus, Peter answered boldly, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God you must judge. But we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard."

The Apostles were so great favourites with the people at this time that the council did not like to hurt them; so they only threatened them, and let them go.

They would not leave off preaching about Jesus and the resurrection for any threats. This very much annoyed that part of the ruling Jews who were called Sadducees, because they taught that there was no resurrection. But a wise man named Gamaliel, of the Pharisees—the opposite party—advised them to let the Apostles alone. He said if the thing was only from men it would come to nothing; but if it was from God they could not overthrow it, and they would be found fighting against God. This good advice was followed, and the Apostles were let alone for a time.

CHAPTER III

STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR

THERE were a great many poor disciples at Jerusalem who had to be supported out of the moneys that were given by their more well-to-do companions. The Greek-speaking Jews who had come from foreign parts complained that their widows did not get a fair share of the gifts. This was a tiresome business, and it hindered the Apostles in preaching and teaching. So they called the whole body of the disciples together, and got them to choose seven men to look after it.

One of these was Stephen. He was a very gifted man, and, besides doing his special duty of seeing that the poor were all properly provided for, he taught and worked wonders. Some of the Jews from North Africa and Asia Minor, who were in Jerusalem at the time, argued with him; but he was too clever for them, and what he had to say was not to be answered. They were in a great rage at being beaten in arguing, and they got men to swear before the council that he was guilty of blasphemy. These men accused him of speaking against the Temple and the law. This was much the same charge as that which had been brought against Jesus.

All the council turned to Stephen to see how he would take the accusation. His face was so bright and beautiful with the joy of God that it looked to them like the face of an angel.

The high priest asked him, "Are these things so?"

Stephen made a most eloquent speech in reply. He went back over the history of his people, showing how all along they had disobeyed the Spirit of God. Then he boldly turned on them, calling them a stiff-necked people. "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?" he said. "They killed those who told them beforehand about the coming of the Righteous One, of whom you have now become betrayers and murderers."

When they heard him say these things they were cut to the heart, and gnashed their teeth against him in rage. But Stephen was full of the Spirit of God, and, looking up to heaven with a fixed gaze, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and he said, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!"

This was blasphemy to them. They stopped their ears; they tried to shout him down; they all rose up together and rushed at him, and, seizing him, dragged him out of the city. The witnesses, whose duty it was, according to an old Jewish custom, to act as executioners and stone a man condemned to death, laid their coats at the feet of a young man

named Saul. Stephen had not been condemned. It was a mere act of violence, the council behaving like a mob. Still, he was stoned. As they were flinging the stones at him he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He was beaten down to the ground; but on his knees he cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." These were his last words. Cruel as was the murder of him, his dying seemed to his friends just like falling asleep, he was so calm, and brave, and peaceful.

After this there was a great persecution. Saul took a leading part in it, breaking into houses, and leading men and women off to prison. The persecution scattered the family life at Jerusalem. But wherever the disciples went they carried the good news of Jesus Christ; and so the persecution really was the means of spreading missionary work further afield.

CHAPTER IV

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

IN the course of these wanderings of the scattered disciples after the persecution that followed the murder of Stephen, Philip, another of the seven men who had been appointed to look after the poor, was led to go down from Jerusalem towards a place called Gaza, away in the south country by a lonely road through the desert. Now it happened that an Ethiopian of high rank under Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of her treasures, had come all the way up from the south of Arabia, and perhaps even further, to worship God in the Temple of Jerusalem. He must have heard of the God of the Jews in his far-off country, perhaps from travelling merchants, and his heart was moved to make this long journey to the place where that God was worshipped. He was very anxious to know more. So it would seem, when he was in Jerusalem, he bought the Jews' Bible—our Old Testament, or perhaps only part of it, the Book of Isaiah, and he was so eager to read his book that he could not wait till he got home. He had it out in his carriage as he drove along the quiet road.

When he overtook Philip, who was walking on the same road, the Spirit of God whispered to Philip to go up to him. So Philip ran after the

carriage, and as he came near he heard the Ethiopian reading aloud to himself.

Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading.

“How can I,” he answered, “unless somebody explain it to me?” And he begged Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the part of the Bible he was reading was this —

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,
So he opened not his mouth.”

These words and those that follow were much perplexing him.

“Pray tell me,” he said, “of whom is the prophet speaking? Of himself, or of some other person?”

Then Philip began to use this scripture to tell him about Jesus Christ. As they went on their way they came to some water, and the Ethiopian said, “See, here is water. What is to hinder me being baptized?” He told the coachman to stop the carriage, and they both got out and went down to the water, and Philip baptized the Ethiopian. After this the Spirit of God led Philip to leave the Ethiopian, and he went first to a city called Azotus, and, passing through it, he preached the good news to all the cities on the way till he came to Cæsarea, on the coast of the Mediterranean, the headquarters of the Roman government in Palestine, a very important place.

As far as we know, the Ethiopian was the first man not born a Jew who was baptized as a disciple of Jesus Christ. But very likely he had joined himself to the Jewish religion when he was at Jerusalem, if not before. Soon after this some people who had had nothing to do with the Jewish religion became disciples of Christ.

It was brought about in this way. Some of those who were scattered abroad because of the persecution at the time of Stephen's death went as far as Cyprus, and some of the followers of Christ from that island and from Cyrene on the north coast of Africa, all of them Jews, went to Antioch, the capital of Syria, and there they preached to the Greeks and Syrians. A number of people accepted their message, and so there was a body of Gentile followers of Christ in that city. This was the first Gentile church. It became a great missionary church for the heathen in Asia and Europe. The name "Christian" was first used at Antioch for these followers of Christ.

CHAPTER V

PETER ON HIS TRAVELS

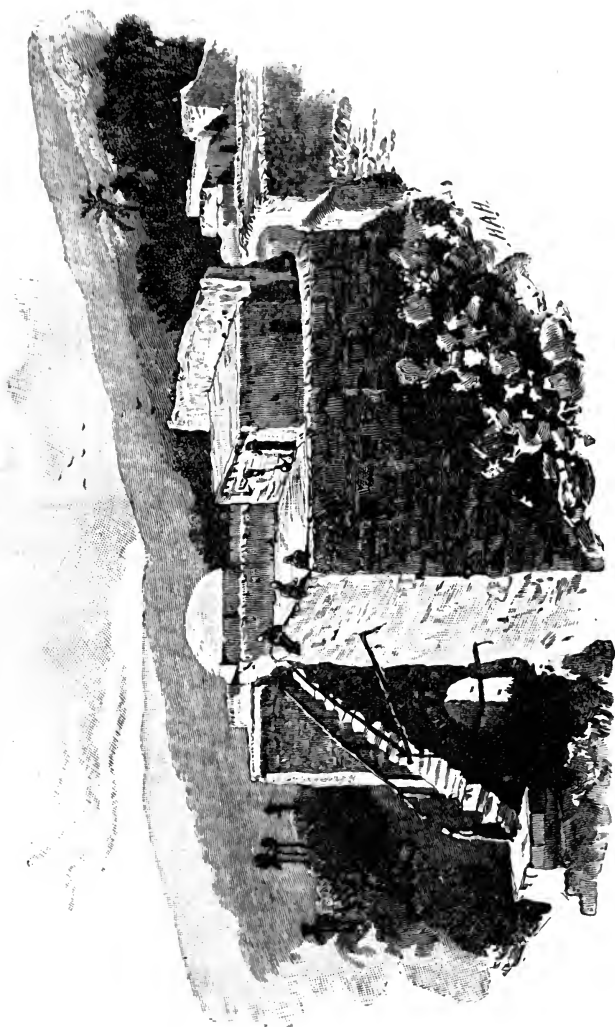
IN course of time the persecution died out. One reason for this was that the most fierce of the persecutors suddenly turned round and became himself a Christian. The story of this wonderful change will be told in the next chapter. The Christians in Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace now, and Peter went on his travels, visiting them in various places.

Then it was, as we read, that he came across a man, named Æneas, who was paralyzed, and who had kept his bed for eight years.

Peter said to him, "Æneas, Jesus Christ is healing you. Get up and make your bed." He did so at once.

A good many people at Lydda, and in other parts of that neighbourhood, came to believe in Jesus Christ.

The story goes on to tell of a wonderful thing that happened at another place near by — at Joppa, on the Mediterranean, the port for Jerusalem. A good Christian woman, named Tabitha (or Dorcas in Greek), fell ill and died. They sent to Lydda to tell Peter; and he came back with the messenger. When he went upstairs to the room where Dorcas had been laid, he found a number of poor



UPPER CHAMBER ON ROOF



women standing round her crying, and showing the clothes she had made for them. Peter put them all out, and kneeled down and prayed. Then turning to the body, he said, "TABITHA, ARISE!" She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. He held out his hand to her, and raised her up; and after this he called the people in, and showed them Dorcas alive again.

Peter now went to lodge at the house of a man named Simon, a tanner at Joppa. There are tanneries at this place—now called Jaffa—at the present day. The Jews avoided tanners, holding them to be unclean, because they had to touch the hides of dead animals. But Peter had learnt enough of the mind of his Master to stay in the house of one of these despised people. He was soon to learn more.

Up the coast at Cæsarea there was a centurion—that is, a Roman officer in charge of about a hundred soldiers—named Cornelius. Though he was a Roman he worshipped the true God, and was a very kind man to the poor, and was much given to prayer. But he wanted to know more about God. One night he had a vision of a messenger telling him to send to Joppa for Peter. So he sent two of his servants and the soldier who used to wait on him. This soldier, too, was a man who worshipped the true God. They set out early, and by twelve o'clock the next morning they were drawing near to Joppa.

At this very time Peter had gone up to the house-top to pray. Feeling hungry, he asked the people of the house to get him some food. While they were preparing it he fell into a deep sleep, and had a vision. He thought he saw a sheet let down from heaven with all sorts of animals on it. And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

"No, Lord," he answered, "for I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

The voice came a second time, and said, "What God has cleansed call not thou common or unclean."

While Peter was wondering what the vision could mean, the messengers came from Cornelius. Then he understood that he was not to call the heathen common or unclean, and he went and preached Christ to Cornelius and his people.

VIII

THE STORY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL



CHAPTER I

ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

IN the days when Saul was still a persecutor, fiercer than ever, he went to the high-priest and got letters giving him a right to go to the synagogues at Damascus to see if he could find any people of the "Way," as it was called—that is, the Christian way of life—whether men or women, and bring them in chains to Jerusalem.

As you come near to Damascus you travel over a desert country, and see before you the green gardens round the city and the white houses in their midst. When Saul was at this part of the road, suddenly he saw a bright light, and heard a voice which said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?"

"Who art thou, Lord?" he asked.

And the voice said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting. But rise, stand on your feet, and go into the city; there it will be told you what you are to do."

When he got up he found he could not see.

They led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus; and he was three days without sight, refusing to eat or drink.

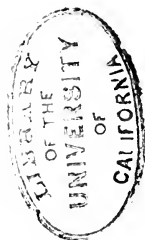
Now there was in Damascus a Christian named Ananias. This man was led by the Spirit of Christ to seek out Saul. "Arise," the Lord said to him in a vision, "and go to the street called Straight, and ask in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus, for he is praying."

Ananias could not believe it. He had heard of the fierce persecutor, and he knew why Saul had come to Damascus. The Christians of that city were expecting him to hunt them out and carry them off. It was a time of great danger. And now Ananias is to go directly to the house where the terrible man is lodging. That must have seemed to him as bad as walking into a lion's den. But Ananias is told that Saul has been chosen by Christ to carry His name to the Gentiles and kings as well as to the people of Israel.

Ananias conquered his fears and went forth on his errand. When he had found Saul he laid his hands on him, and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road has sent me that you may have your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately it seemed as though the scales fell from his eyes, and he got his sight back. Then he rose up and was baptized; and after that he began to take food and was strengthened.



THE STRAIGHT STREET, DAMASCUS



This was a tremendous change for Saul. But he would not seek guidance from any man. He went away into Arabia, and there under the teachings of God in the desert he was prepared for his great life-work. Then he came back to Damascus and preached there. This enraged the Jews, and they would have killed him. So his friends let him down from the city wall in a basket at night, and he got safely away.

He went to Jerusalem to see Peter. At first the Christians were afraid to receive him. But one of them, Barnabas, a very generous, large-hearted man, spoke for him. He saw James, too, the Lord's brother; but no other of the Apostles. The churches of Judea did not know him by sight. But they heard that he who had once persecuted them was now preaching the faith of Christ, and for this they glorified God.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST MISSIONARY EXPEDITION

THERE had been a great deal of missionary work before this; but it had been in the free acts of private persons. There was no missionary society, no means of sending out missionaries. The first missionary society was the Church at Antioch, that church of Greeks and Syrians which had grown out of the teaching of the men from Cyprus and Cyrene.

Saul had gone back to his native town of Tarsus. But his friend Barnabas had fetched him to Antioch; and the two had been sent to Jerusalem with a caravan, taking food for the Christians at Jerusalem in a time of famine. It was after this that the Spirit of God in the Church at Antioch told them to separate Barnabas and Saul for a special work. So the members of the Church prayed and fasted, and laid their hands on these two, solemnly ordaining them to be missionaries, and then sent them forth. They went on their journey as messengers from the Church; and they took with them John Mark, the man who afterwards wrote our second Gospel.

First they went to the island of Cyprus; there were good reasons for beginning there. Christians from Cyprus had helped to found the Church at Antioch; it was Barnabas' old home; and it was

not far from Antioch. As they went through the island preaching the Gospel one result was that the chief man in Cyprus, the proconsul — that is, the Roman governor — was brought to believe in Jesus Christ. His name was Sergius Paulus. From this time Saul is called Paul, perhaps after the proconsul.

When they had travelled right through the island, preaching as they went, they took ship and sailed across to the mainland of Asia Minor, landing at a port called Perga.

In one of his letters Paul tells us that about this time he had a strange vision, for he seemed to be caught up to heaven. Then to keep him humble God sent him something so painful that he could only compare it to a stake of wood driven into his flesh. We do not know what this was. Some people think it was a disease in his eyes, some that it might have been a fever that seized him down by the hot, unwholesome coast. If so, perhaps this was the reason why he turned to the bracing air of the mountains. There is a great wild range of mountains, covered with snow in winter, that runs along the south of Asia Minor. When Paul determined to climb these mountains Mark would not go with him. They had a dispute over it, and the end was that Mark left Paul and Barnabas, and went home to his mother at Jerusalem.

The two climbed the mountains, and carried the good news of Jesus Christ to the towns on the other

side. First they went to the Jews, but when most of their own countrymen turned against them they preached to the Gentiles. This made the Jews very angry and jealous.

At a place called Lystra they met a cripple. Paul looked at him steadfastly, and saw that he had faith to be healed. So he said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And the man leaped up, and was able to walk.

This so astonished the heathen people that they said, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men." Barnabas they called Zeus, the king of the gods, and Paul they took for Hermes, the messenger god, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus brought oxen, decorated with garlands of flowers to offer as sacrifices to the two missionaries. But when Barnabas and Paul understood what was going on they were horrified, and they leaped among the people, crying, "Sirs, why are you doing this? We are men of the same nature as yourselves." But for all they said they could scarcely prevent the people from sacrificing to them.

In this very town where they had been treated as gods, a party of Jews from the neighbouring towns turned the mob against Paul; and they stoned him, and then dragged him out of the city, supposing he was dead. As he lay in the dust, bruised and bleeding, those people whom he had won to believe in Christ, came and stood round him. To their surprise and joy he got up, and was able to walk back

to the city. Paul and Barnabas travelled on to another town, and then came back over the same ground.

In his missionary journeys Paul went through many dangers, among mountains and torrents, from robbers and enemies, in hunger and cold, on the sea and in the desert. He was shipwrecked three or four times. He passed a day and night in the sea. Once he was scourged. It was a life of toil and hardship. But Paul was a hero and a martyr for Christ's sake.

CHAPTER III

THE QUARREL WITH PETER

WHEN Paul and Barnabas had come back to Antioch they met the Church, and told them of their adventures and the way God had won disciples for Jesus Christ by means of their preaching, especially among the Gentiles.

But some of the strict Jewish Christians at Jerusalem did not think it right that Gentiles should be allowed to become Christians and join the churches without becoming like Jews and keeping the Jewish law. Some of these people came down to Antioch and told the Greek and Syrian Christians there that if they did not obey the law of the Jews they could not be saved. Paul did not believe anything of the kind, and he thought this interference unreasonable and unkind. So there was a great deal of questioning and arguing between them.

The Church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas and some other of their members to Jerusalem to ask the Church there for its advice on this question; a meeting of the Church at Jerusalem was held, and the matter was talked over. Peter stood up and advised his brethren not to put a heavy burden on the converts from heathenism. But the Church kept silent; they hardly dared to accept such an

opinion, for they had all been taught from their childhood that people must keep the old law of Moses if they would be saved. Then Barnabas and Paul got up and told them what wonderful things God had been doing among the heathen by means of their missionary work. As soon as they had finished their story James, the brother of Jesus, who was at the head of the Church at Jerusalem, stood up and gave it as his opinion that they should not trouble these heathen converts to keep the law of the Jews. So a letter was sent back to the Church at Antioch with this answer.

Paul had his own business in Jerusalem. He knew that Jesus had called him to be an Apostle; but those Jewish Christians who were jealous of his offering the Gospel to the Gentiles would not allow that he was an Apostle. And now when he was led by the Spirit of God, by a revelation as he says, to bring this private matter of his own before the Apostles, he showed how truly Christ had owned him by blessing his work. The missionary story quite persuaded the chief leaders of the Church at Jerusalem, James and Peter and John; and these men shook hands with Paul as a fellow-Apostle, agreeing that Paul and Barnabas should go to the heathen, while the older Apostles kept themselves to the Jews.

After this Peter went down to Antioch, and there he sat at table with Gentile Christians as a brother among them, for he was naturally generous and warm-hearted. But when some of James' friends

from Jerusalem, who thought it wrong to eat with Gentiles, came down to Antioch, he was ashamed of what he had been doing, and he left off mixing with the Gentiles in the same brotherly way. Paul thought that cowardly and deceitful, and he blamed him for it hotly to his face. It looked like the same weakness Peter had shown when he had denied His Master in the high-priest's palace. But perhaps he hardly knew what he ought to do in the matter, and was too much carried away with his feelings, first one way and then the other, and perhaps Paul was not quite kind in judging him so hardly.

CHAPTER IV

“COME OVER AND HELP US”

SOME time after these things Paul took another companion, Silas, and visited the churches he had founded in Asia Minor. When they had passed through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, where these churches were, a strange, mysterious warning of the Spirit of God in their hearts checked them again and again, as they were going first this way and then that; and they were shut up to going to the north-west, to a place called Troas, on the sea-coast, from which you can see Mount Athos in Macedonia. In the night Paul had a vision. He thought he saw a man from Macedonia standing before him, and pleading with him, saying, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us.” He took this as a message from God, and started off at once with his companions, sailing straight across to the nearest port. Paul was now in Europe for the first time in his life. He felt it was the will of God that he should make the good news of Jesus Christ known to the people of Europe, and after this a great part of his work lay in our continent.

The first town at which he stayed was Philippi. On the Sabbath day the missionaries went out by the water-gate along the bank of a river, till they

came to a place where some women used to meet for prayer ; and there they sat down and gave their message. Then God opened the heart of one of these women, Lydia, a seller of purple ; and she was baptized with her household. Lydia was the first of Paul's converts in Europe.

One day, when Paul was walking to the place of prayer by the river-bank, he met a poor slave girl, who was supposed by the people to be haunted by a Python, that is, a spirit that gave her power to foretell the future. Paul told the spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her. Then the girl could not speak any more in the way that made the people think she was inspired. Her masters saw that they could no longer hope to make a profit for themselves from her prophesying ; and they dragged Paul and Silas into the market-place before the magistrates, charging them with teaching customs that were unlawful for Romans.

The magistrates ordered them to be beaten with rods. This was done with many strokes ; and then the magistrates ordered them to prison, commanding the jailer to keep them safely. So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon, and made their feet fast in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns, when there was an earthquake which shook the walls, so that the doors flew open. The jailer had been asleep, and when the earthquake woke him up and he saw the doors open, he thought the prisoners must have

escaped. If he had allowed them to get out, he would have been punished with death. He was in despair, and he drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul shouted to him, “Do yourself no harm ; for we are all here.” Then the man called for lights, and rushed in trembling with fear, and fell down at the feet of Paul and Silas, crying, “What must I do to be saved ?” He was terrified at the earthquake, and fearful as to what his masters would do to him. But Paul wanted to lead him to a better salvation than deliverance from these dangers. For this reason Paul said, “Trust to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.” Then he told him about Christ, and the man believed and was baptized with his household. The next day Paul and Silas were set free.

CHAPTER V

PAUL AT ATHENS

PAUL and his companions went on with their travels through Macedonia. At Thessalonica they won a number of converts among the weavers and seafaring people. But the Jews stirred up a dangerous riot, and Paul had to be hurried away, leaving his work unfinished. After going some distance he sent back his companions to see how the Christians at Thessalonica were holding on in the midst of the dangers that surrounded them.

In this way Paul came to be travelling alone for a time. He went down through Greece, and came to the famous city of Athens. Here, while he was waiting for his friends to join him, his spirit was stirred and pained to see how the city was given up to idolatry. There were statues of Hermes at every street corner, idols in private houses, magnificent temples for various gods, and a splendid gold and ivory statue of Athene, the goddess who was supposed to take charge of Athens, high above all on the rock of the citadel.

Paul went to the synagogue of the Jews, and explained his message to them, and he went to the market-place every day, and talked to the people there — the very place where Socrates used to talk

to the Athenians in the old days long before. The people of Athens at this time were famous for their curiosity. One of their favourite amusements was to listen to the travelling lecturers, who picked up a living by going about from town to town with novel teaching. The only thing they wanted was that they should not be treated to stale teaching. Old tales they were tired of. Give us something new, they always said. But when these smart Athenians saw a little Jew dressed as a working-man come among them with an offer to teach them they began to laugh. They had not a bit of respect for him. "What can this sham wise man have to tell us?" they said. But some who listened to him, and heard him preaching about Jesus and the resurrection, said, "He seems to be talking about strange gods."

Now there was a very ancient court of law, which met in the old days on the rock called the hill of Ares (the god of war) to try people who were said to be disrespectful to the gods. It was this court that had condemned Socrates to death. In the days of Paul it had lost its old power, and plenty of people were disrespectful to the gods of Athens at this time without anybody troubling himself. Still such foolish things were taught by some of the lecturers that the council had the right given it to forbid lectures they thought might be mischievous to young people.

Paul was taken before this court. He made a

magnificent speech. He told his hearers that they seemed to be very religious. He had even seen an altar to an unknown God. He had come to tell them about this unknown God—the great God



ALTAR FROM ATHENS, IN BRITISH MUSEUM

who made the world, and in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Paul quoted one of their own poets, who had said, “We are also his offspring.”

And then, standing as he was in Athens among the statues of the Greek gods, he showed how foolish it was to think God could be like gold, or silver, or stone, carved by men as a work of art. God, he said, was going to judge the world for its folly and wickedness by a Man whom he had raised from the dead. When Paul spoke of a rising from the dead the Athenians burst out laughing. That was too much for them; they said they would hear the rest another time. And yet some believed in him, and among these was even one of the council, a man named Dionysius.

CHAPTER VI

THE RIOT AT EPHESUS

FROM Athens Paul went to Corinth; and there he was joined by his friends from Thessalonica. They told him his converts, the new Christians at Thessalonica, had been in much trouble; so he wrote a comforting letter, and followed this with another. These were the first epistles of Paul, perhaps they were the first books of the New Testament. Paul went to Corinth with a very simple message. All he had made up his mind to preach about was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Yet he won a great many believers. These were mostly among the poor and uneducated people. People who thought themselves clever were too proud to take in his message.

Paul was a year and a half at Corinth. Then the Jews had him taken up and brought before the proconsul Gallio, for teaching what was contrary to the law. But Gallio was a cool and just man, and when it was only the law of the Jews that Paul was supposed to have broken, he thought it was all a quarrel about words, and he would have nothing to do with it.

Paul stayed at Corinth a few days longer, and then sailed for Syria, going back to Antioch.



DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS



Then he set out again, and travelled till he reached Ephesus, where he taught in the lecture-room of a man named Tyrannus, and kept himself by working at the trade of a tent-maker. His teaching had such a great effect that he won many believers. Here, too, he worked wonders, healing the sick in the name of Jesus Christ. Some people who had been living as witches and sorcerers brought their magical books and burnt them in a public place. It was calculated that these books altogether were worth a great deal of money, as much as we should now call £1770.

While Paul was at Ephesus, he received a letter from the church he had founded at Corinth, asking his advice about several questions that had troubled them. At the same time, some people who had come from Corinth told him of quarrels in the church, and dreadful faults among the members, of which they had said nothing in their letter. Paul wrote to them on these sad things first, and then he answered their questions.

At the end of the two and a half years, he thought he would take a journey up to Macedonia, and round through Greece, to collect money for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. He was very anxious to bind all the Christians together in brotherly love, and especially to get the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to feel kindly towards the Gentile Christians among the heathen.

About this time a silversmith named Demetrius,

who used to make silver images of the goddess Artemis, gathered the workmen of his craft together, and showed them how the preaching of Paul was leading people away from the worship of the goddess. This would spoil their trade and ruin them. There was a great and splendid temple of Artemis at Ephesus. It was the pride of the city, one of the wonders of the world. So Demetrius stirred up his fellow-workmen of the silver-smith trade to go shouting through the city, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." In this way they raised a serious riot, though most of the people had not the least idea of what it was all about. Still they seized some of Paul's companions, and dragged them into the theatre. Paul wanted to go in after them, but his friends held him back. For two hours the mob did nothing but shout, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." At length the town-clerk quieted them by threatening them with punishment from the Roman government, which would not stand a riot on any account. After this scene was over, Paul took leave of his friends and set off on his journey.

CHAPTER VII

PAUL'S LAST VISIT TO JERUSALEM

PAUL made the first part of his journey as he had planned it. He went up from Ephesus and crossed over to Macedonia. There he wrote a second and more agreeable letter to his friends at Corinth, and he followed it himself a little later. About this time, or a little earlier, he heard bad news of the churches in Galatia. Most likely these were the churches he had founded when he went with Barnabas on his first missionary journey. Some of the stiff Jewish Christians from Jerusalem had gone among the simple impetuous people and turned them against Paul. That was not the worst. They had persuaded the Galatians to keep the Jewish law. So they had made them think less of Christ and His cross. All this greatly grieved Paul. His heart was full of love for his people. As he travelled about he remembered them every day in his prayers. It was most disappointing for him to learn that any of them were growing cold and turning aside. So he wrote a very sharp letter to the Galatians. Then he wrote a letter to the Christians at Rome, whom he had never seen, because he was anxious that they should know the truth about forgiveness and the new life — that it came simply through faith

in Jesus Christ, quite apart from the law of the Jews, or anything that we can do for ourselves.

Paul spent three months in Greece. He had collected the money for the poor Christians of Jerusalem, and he was ready to set sail for Syria, when he heard the Jews had a plot to kill him. For this reason he changed his course and went back again round by Macedonia, and then down to Miletus, near Ephesus, where the principal people from the church at Ephesus came out to bid him farewell. They were very sad; and they wept, and fell on his neck and kissed him, for he had told them he would never see them again. If he went to Jerusalem it seemed almost certain that the Jews would kill him. Why then was he so determined to go? Because he was anxious above all things to bring the two kinds of Christians together; and he thought if he carried up the present from the churches among the heathen, and gave it himself to the Jerusalem Christians, he might be able to make them look upon these far-off Christians as brothers and sisters, even though they were not Jews.

So he sailed on, and came to Cæsarea. There the Christians tried to keep him from going to such a dangerous place as Jerusalem. One of them, a prophet named Agabus, bound his feet and hands with Paul's girdle, saying that the Holy Spirit had shown him that the Jews at Jerusalem would bind the man who owned that girdle. His travelling

friends were alarmed for him, and even they joined in begging him not to go on. But Paul answered them, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

When they found he would not be persuaded, they left off urging him, and said, "The will of the Lord be done."

So Paul went to Jerusalem, and the Christians there received him very kindly. But some Jews from Ephesus had followed him as spies, and they said to the Jerusalem Jews that Paul had taken a man of their own town, who was a Gentile, into the Temple and so defiled it. This raised a riot. The people laid hold of Paul, and dragged him out of the Temple. They would have killed him, but for the Roman soldiers who rescued him. When they were about to carry him off to the castle, he begged leave to speak to the people. The officer consented, and standing on the steps of the castle under the protection of the guard of Roman soldiers, Paul told the Jews the wonderful story of his conversion. But when he came to the part where he had the command to preach to the Gentiles, the Jews would not hear him any longer. This simply drove them wild. They behaved like madmen. They tore off their coats and flung dust in the air. The officer had Paul taken into the castle and tied up ready for being scourged to get

the truth out of him. But Paul asked if they were doing what was lawful to scourge a man who was a Roman. This surprised the captain. But Paul said he was a free-born Roman, because he was a citizen of the free town of Tarsus. They could not scourge him when they knew that.

CHAPTER VIII

IMPRISONMENT AT CÆSAREA

THE captain of the castle allowed Paul to appear before the Jewish council. But this led to such an uproar between the two parties in the council that Paul was in danger of being torn to pieces among them, and the captain had to rescue him again.

The next day forty Jews bound themselves by an oath that they would not eat or drink anything till they had killed Paul. Paul's sister's son heard of it, and he went into the castle and told Paul, who called one of the centurions, and asked him to take the young man to the chief captain. The chief captain took him by the hand, and led him aside to question him privately. Then he called two of the centurions, and ordered them to get ready two hundred spearmen and seventy horsemen to take Paul under guard to Cæsarea.

Paul was sent to the governor Felix at Cæsarea ; and the high-priest and some of the principal Jews came down and accused him there of being a disturber of the peace. Felix was interested in Paul's defence, and he ordered him to be kept in a comfortable way, and his friends were to be allowed to visit him. Felix was married to a Jewess named Drusilla,

and they would often send for Paul to hear him. But when he reasoned about right living and God's judgment on wickedness, Felix was terrified and sent him away. He was hoping that Paul would give him money to be set free. So he kept Paul in prison for two years. At the end of the two years Felix was removed from his office, and another governor, Festus, appointed to it. The Jews asked Festus to send Paul to Jerusalem. But he was too shrewd to fall into their trap; he said he would examine him himself at Cæsarea. When he did so Paul claimed his right as a Roman citizen, and appealed to Cæsar. He could not get justice from the governors of Syria. He would go to Rome and be tried by the Emperor. Festus was obliged to allow this.

Before Paul was sent to Rome, Agrippa, the last of the Herods, and Bernice, his wife, came to Cæsarea, and to please him, as he was a Jew, Festus had Paul brought out before him. So Agrippa came with great pomp, and his queen with him, and Paul made his defence before them. It was a noble defence. He became very excited in his eloquence, and Festus interrupted him, saying, "Paul, you are mad; your great learning is driving you out of your mind."

Paul answered, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus; I am speaking true and sober words."

Then he turned to Agrippa, saying, "The king knows of these things, before whom I speak freely,

for this was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe in the prophets? I know you believe."

This was rather too personal for the king, and he answered scornfully, "So with a little persuading you would have me be a Christian?" Paul answered, "I would to God that whether with little or with much, not you only, but all that hear me to-day, might become such as I am — except these bonds."

CHAPTER IX

THE SHIPWRECK

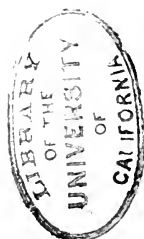
PAUL was taken with some other prisoners on board a coasting vessel, and the ship put out to sea. The prisoners were in charge of a centurion named Julius, who was very friendly to Paul. The first place they touched was Tyre, and here Paul was allowed to go ashore and visit his friends. Putting to sea again, they sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. Then they ran across to Myra, a town of Lycia, in the south of Asia Minor. As the ship was now going up the coast to the north, they left it here, and took one that had come into port from Alexandria, and was bound for Italy.

They sailed slowly till they reached Crete. Coming under the lee of the island, they coasted along it with difficulty till they came to a place called "Fair Havens." They had been so delayed that it was now nearly the end of September, and they were likely to have nasty weather from the equinoctial gales. But as this place was not a convenient one to winter in, they weighed anchor under a soft south wind, and sailed along Crete close in shore, making for a better harbour.

Before long a fierce wind beat down on them. The ship was caught in it, and there was nothing to



A ROMAN CENTURION



do but run before the gale. While they were passing under the shelter of a small island they were able to draw up the boat they had in tow, for it was in danger of being swept away; and also to bind ropes round the hull of the ship to hold her together against the force of the waves. The danger was that they would be driven on the quicksands called "Syrtis," which were the terror of all sailors on these waters. They lowered the gear, and with only storm sails set they laboured heavily in the sea.

The next day they began to throw the freight overboard. They were driven under dense clouds, never seeing the sun by day nor the stars by night; so, as the ancients had no such thing as a compass, they lost all reckoning and gave up any hope of being saved.

At times like this it becomes clear that those who know and trust God are much better off than people who live without God. Paul was only a prisoner; but he was able to put heart into the frightened passengers and crew. He was sure that God would protect them.

They had been drifting in this dangerous way for a fortnight, and were now being driven to and fro in the Adriatic, when the sailors learnt by sounding that they were getting into shallow water. It was midnight. Fearing that they might be dashed on some rocky coast, they let down four anchors, and prayed for the morning. Under the pretence of letting down an anchor from the foreship, the sailors

lowered a boat to escape. Paul pointed this out to the centurion, saying it was impossible for the soldiers to be saved if these men deserted the ship. The soldiers made short work of this business. They cut the ropes of the boat, and let her fall into the sea.

It was a dreary night ; but when the day began to break, Paul encouraged all on board to take some food. When it was light enough they saw a bay with a beach. Casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea, at the same time letting the rudders loose and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for land. Coming upon a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground. The foreship stuck fast ; but the stern began to break up under the violence of the waves. The soldiers advised killing the prisoners. But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, stayed them, and commanded those who could swim to throw themselves overboard first ; the rest were to go as they could — some on planks, and some on broken pieces of the ship. There were two hundred and seventy-six souls on board ; but they all got safely to shore.

They found they were on the island of Malta. They must have been miserably cold and wet, and quite worn out ; but the natives were very kind and lit a fire for them.

While Paul was throwing some wood he had gathered on the fire a snake that was among the sticks, roused by the heat, sprang out and fastened

on his hand. The natives first thought he must be a murderer punished in this way, although he had escaped the sea. But when he shook the beast off into the fire and took no harm, they thought he must be a god.

After three months they set sail in a ship from Alexandria called "The Two Brothers," that had wintered in the island. They touched Syracuse and Rhegium, and landed at Puteoli. From there they went on by land. Paul was met by some of the Christians from Rome at a place called "The Market of Appius," and by some more at "The Three Taverns." The sight of them cheered him, and he thanked God and took courage. At Rome he was allowed to remain for two years in his own hired house.

It is not easy to say what is exactly the end of the Bible story, because it is written in several books of different dates. While he was at Rome, Paul wrote letters to the churches at Philippi and Colosse, and the neighbourhood of Ephesus. He wrote, too, a beautiful letter to his friend Philemon, asking him to receive back a runaway slave, named Onesimus. The slave had stolen some of his master's property; but Paul had met him, and he was now a changed man. It seems that when Paul was tried before the Emperor Nero he was found to be innocent, and set free. Then he travelled again, and wrote letters to his helpers, Timothy

and Titus. But he was at Rome a second time when Nero began to persecute the Christians. Then most likely Paul was beheaded; Peter, too, seems to have been killed at Rome at the same time. A few years later, James, the head of the Church at Jerusalem, was flung down from a high part of the Temple, and clubbed or stoned to death. These three were all martyrs; so were many more of the early Christians, though John lived on to old age. As one by one the first disciples of Jesus Christ passed away, others took their places, and the numbers grew; and from this beginning, the Christian life has gone on right down to our own day. And now we have the story of Jesus and His Apostles, that we may learn to follow in His footsteps, and be guided and helped by their teaching.



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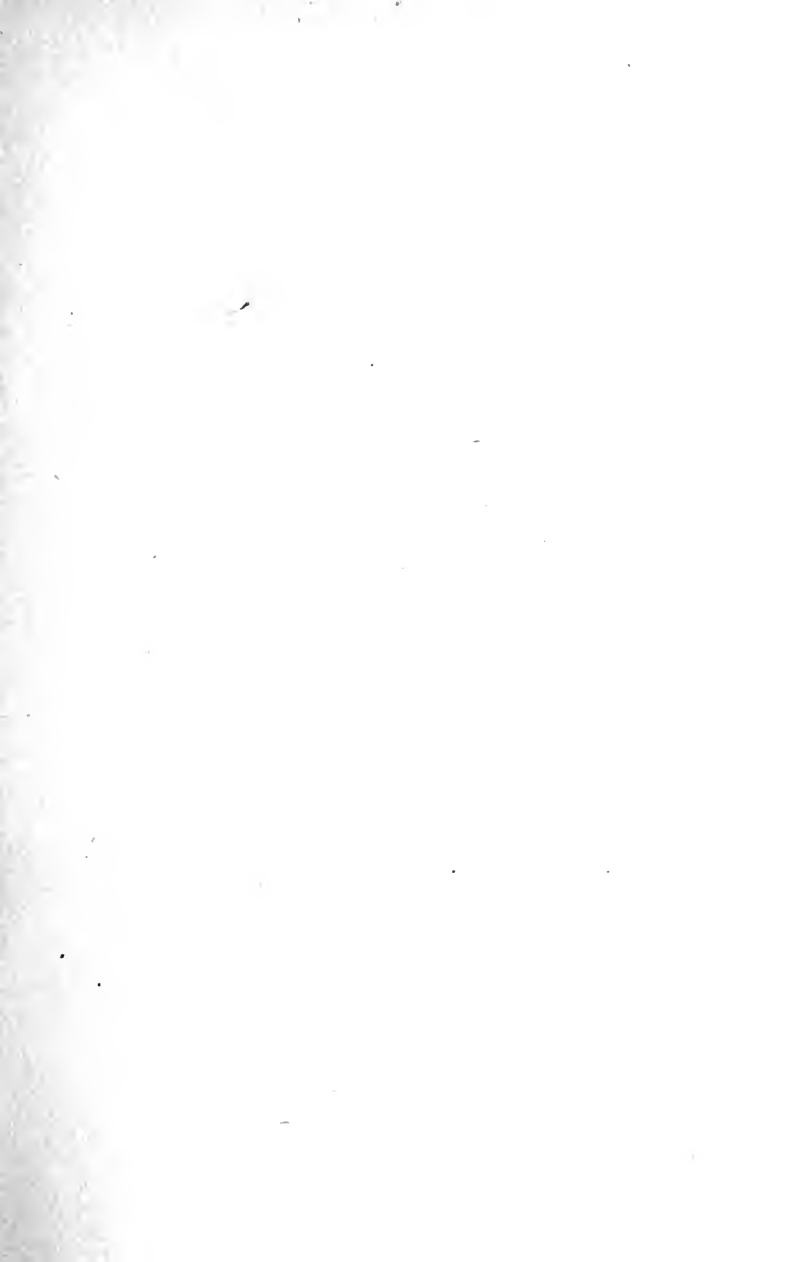
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